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## **The history of the Town of Mount Vernon : sesquicentennial celebration, 1846-1996. 1996**

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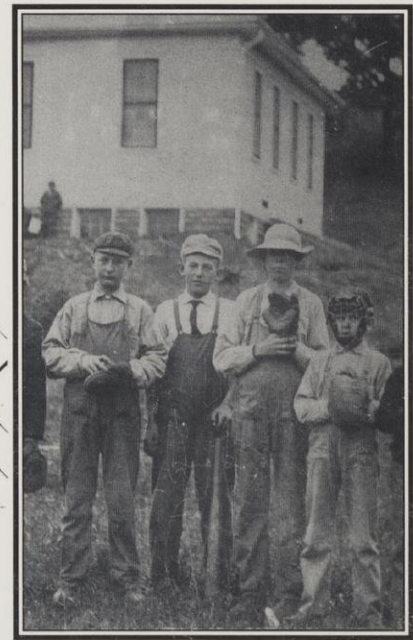
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Mt. Horeb Public Library  
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# MOUNT VERNON WISCONSIN 1846-1996



150 YEARS  
DOWN BY  
THE  
OLD MILL  
STREAM



WIS  
977.583  
HIS

WISCONSIN





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REF  
The history of the Town of

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**The  
History  
of**

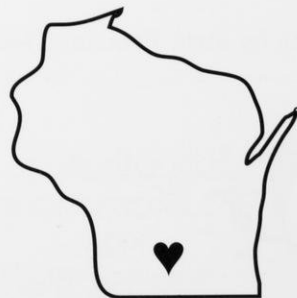
**the Town of**

**≡ MOUNT VERNON ≡**

**Located in  
Southwestern Dane County,  
Wisconsin**

**≡ 1846 - 1996 ≡**

**SESQUICENTENNIAL  
CELEBRATION**





# Sugar River Valley Farm

WERNER TASHER, Proprietor.



Breeder of Clydesdale Horses, Holstein Fresian Cattle,  
Graded and Thoroughbred,

⇒ **POLAND CHINA HOGS.** ⇐  
**Mt. Vernon, - Wis.**  
TELEPHONE

*Ad from the Mt. Vernon telephone directory, 1909.*

Walter Brink - Historic Committee Chairman and Research

Tim R. White - Historic Research and Communications

Karen L. White - Editor, Layout & Design, Scans and Mac Assembly

Jennifer Goebler - Family Research and Typing

Kathy Sies - Family Research and Typing

Brian Bigler - Historic Consultant and Assistant Editor

Special thanks to all of the residents of the Mt. Vernon area

who submitted information, photographs and articles

for this project, and to the

Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.

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Stereoscopies  
1996  
Verona, Wisconsin

## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
Natural History .....	4
Early Pioneers .....	9
Politicians .....	18
Doctors .....	20
Fit to Print .....	22
Forest of Fame .....	25
Churches .....	27
Schools .....	30
Businesses .....	33
Recreation .....	45
Historic Events .....	53
Memories .....	57
Family Histories .....	63
References .....	96
Contributors .....	97



## THE SESQUICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEES

The 1996 Mt. Vernon Sesquicentennial Celebration promises to be a memorable event. Many community residents have volunteered their time to organize all of the events that will take place in Mt. Vernon on the weekend of October 4th, 5th and 6th. Ben Goebler is the chairman of the celebration, with Guy Austin, co-chairman; Len Marty, treasurer and Kathy Sies, secretary. Sweatshirts, T-shirts, caps and buttons were designed by David Trainor, and are being sold by Vi Ryan. This 150 year historical book was put together with the combined efforts of Walter and Ruth Brink, Tim and Karen White, Jennifer Goebler, Kathy Sies and Brian Bigler. Many residents of Mt. Vernon contributed articles and photographs for the project. Harland and Nona Erfurth are the parade chairpersons, and Audrey Marty and Julie Stapelmann are in charge of the kid's parade. Darleen Goebler, Rick Skindrud and Craig Judd are in charge of entertainment. Bill Ryan, Ed Sies and Herb Bircher will be the park superintendents, and Gerald Trainor will supervise parking. Florence Buetler and Doug and Gail Dahlk will arrange the Zwingli church activities, and Joleen Elsing is the artist preparing posters and float decorations. Earl Garfoot and Karl Hacker, Primrose and Springdale township supervisors, are arranging for the permits and insurance needed for all of the weekend events, and Ray Gilden, Jerry Lehnherr, Craig Judd, and Pete Way are recruiting members of their clubs to help out.



*Top row: Leonard & Audrey Marty, Guy Austin, Nona & Harland Erfurth.  
Middle row: Tim & Karen White, Walter Brink, Gail & Doug Dahlk.  
Front row: Ray & Debbie Gilden, Ed & Kathy Sies, Craig Judd, Jerry  
Lehnherr, Rick Skindrud, Joleen Elsing, Darleen & Ben Goebler, Jennifer  
Goebler. Absent from photo: Vi & Bill Ryan, Karl Hacker, Earl Garfoot.  
-Courtesy of Christine Hynek.*

## DEDICATION

*As chairman of Mount Vernon's Sesquicentennial Celebration in 1996, I am honored to have been nominated for this position. The community spirit backing this historic celebration promises to make all of the events a huge success. Together, the residents of Mt. Vernon have worked hard to create a lasting remembrance of our rich heritage.*

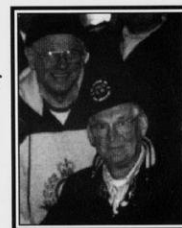
*Although many of the people who helped to celebrate our 125th anniversary will not be with us to celebrate this year, we will remember them as we honor the past. In the future, our children will reflect upon this observance and appreciate our efforts to preserve Mount Vernon's history.*

*To my friends, neighbors and family who have worked diligently to make this celebration one to be remembered for many years to come, I thank you. Especially, let us not forget our good friends John Beutler and Margaret Lee, who have so recently been taken away from us, and will not be able to see our celebration completed.*

God Bless,

Ben T. Goebler, Chairman

Ben Goebler  
John Beutler  
1996



## YOU'RE HISTORY, MOUNT VERNON!

Today, Mount Vernon, like the rest of America, seems transient to those of us experiencing today's fast paced world. We expect everything quick, convenient, mobile and private. Houses are built cheaply, communication is in micro bytes and neighbors are those people next door we hardly ever meet. Because of this, when celebrating an anniversary like Mt. Vernon's 150th, people not born in the area can feel excluded from the very history they are celebrating. What such people don't realize is that they are the new immigrants, and they are being recorded into the forever growing local history.

Likewise, when George Patchin brought his family and pregnant wife from Ohio to the Wilderness in 1846, they did not set out to make history, nor did they imagine that they would be forever remembered as the first settlers of the area. Others who soon followed, like the deceitful, land shark Byam brothers, would be remembered for their highjinks, and some, like John Donald and Robert La Follette, made history through state and local politics, and still others are remembered for the tragedies that befell them. Not all who came to Mt. Vernon dedicated their entire lives to building the community either. When the railroad bypassed the village in favor of Mt. Horeb in 1881, for example, many business owners moved to where the action was. The vast majority of Mt. Vernon's people, however, have given their names for plat maps, businesses, census records, cemetery monuments, tax rolls, sporting events, newspapers, church bulletins or telephone directories. Thus, all have made history, no matter how long they resided in town or how influential they became.

True, common folk seldom wind up on the pages of history textbooks, but it is the everyday records, in fact, which record the past more objectively and portray society most accurately. It is in these archival sources that sociologists and historians search for information, novelists look for inspiration, and genealogists find their own roots. So, all people of Mount Vernon today are still making history. A 150th anniversary reminds us to celebrate this.

Brian J. Bigler, President  
Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.



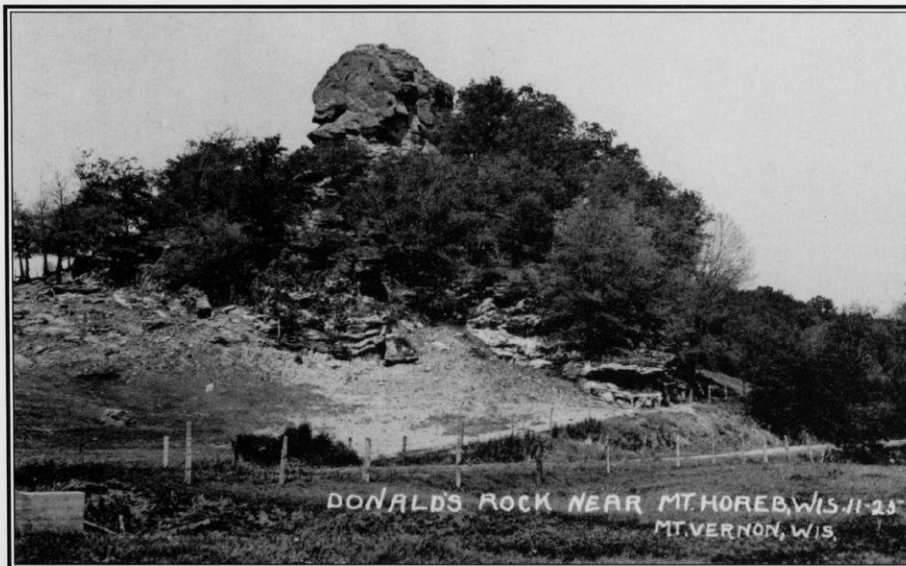
## NATURAL HISTORY OF THE MOUNT VERNON AREA

Throughout the four seasons, while Mt. Vernon residents go about their day-to-day business, the slow geologic processes of erosion and weathering silently sculpt the rolling hills and valleys of the Mt. Vernon countryside, as they have without interruption for the past 450 million years. Unlike much of the remainder of Dane County and Wisconsin, whose landscapes and soils were profoundly altered by continental ice sheets (glaciers) that periodically advanced south from the Hudson Bay region over the past 2.5 million years, the Mt. Vernon area has been shaped by largely non glacial processes. Mt. Vernon lies near the edge of the "Driftless Area," which is a ~10,000 square mile island in southern Wisconsin that has by chance never been overrun by glaciers. As a result, the Mt. Vernon area lacks the deep deposits of glacially-transported sediments and glacial landforms so characteristic of other areas in the state. The geologic evolution of the Mt. Vernon countryside must instead be studied in a non-glacial context, one whose origins date back to the Cambrian period approximately 500 million years ago.

Between 550 and 450 million years ago, shallow continental seas advanced and retreated five times across much of the central United States, including southern Wisconsin. After each regression of the sea, flat lying marine sediments

such as sandstones and dolomites were left behind. When seas retreated for the final time, over 100 feet of sandstones, dolomites, and shales (mud-based rock) had been deposited in the Mt. Vernon area. The final retreat of the seas left behind a largely flat continental landscape that gradually took shape through the everyday processes of water and wind erosion. Stream valleys and ridges in southern Wisconsin began evolving into their present state, and soils formed through the mechanical and chemical weathering of the rock surfaces. Deer Creek, Fryes Feeder, and Mt. Vernon creek all eroded down through the upper, younger rock layers, the Platteville and Galena dolomites into the older St. Peters Sandstone beneath. Donald Rock, near the intersection of Town Hall Road and Highway 92, is an erosion resistant block of St. Peters Sandstone that became isolated as more erodable surrounding sandstone was carried away by water action over many millions of years.

Since 2.5 million years ago, when the edges of large continental glaciers approached the Mt. Vernon area, the two most profound influences on the landscape of the Mt. Vernon area have been humans and glaciers, in that order. Before ~13,500 years ago, the local environment was nearly identical to that in northern Alaska today. The ground was permanently frozen several feet down. The upper soil layer thawed only for a few weeks each year and tended to slide down slopes rapidly due to its muddy character. The local ice sheet dammed the outlets of nearby streams,



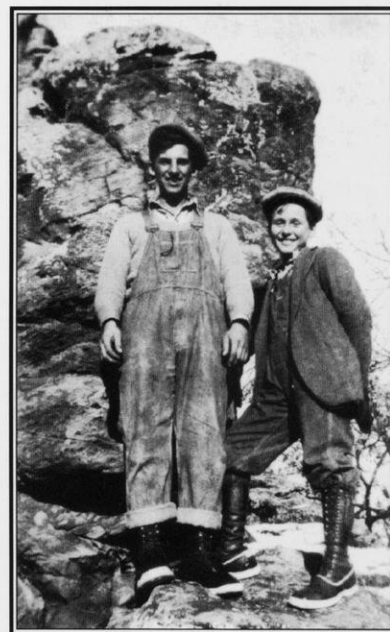
Left:

*Donald's Rock located northwest of Mt. Vernon on Highway 92, at the intersection of Town Hall Rd. Erosion resistant St. Peters Sandstone. -Courtesy of The Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



leading to small glacial lakes that backed up into the valley of Mt. Vernon creek and its tributaries. In some instances a several inch thick layer of light-grey clay was deposited at the bottoms of these lakes and can still be found several feet beneath the valley floors. Plant pollen samples recovered from lake sediments in Dane County indicate that plant life consisted mainly of a treeless tundra with low shrubs and grasses. Since ~13,500 years ago, the local vegetation evolved to a spruce forest as the ice sheet retreated. The bones of woolly mammoths, mastodons, giant beavers, and other large mammals indicate that the local environment supported a rich wildlife population.

After man arrived in central North America some 11,500 years ago, large mammals became extinct, presumably due to overly efficient hunting techniques. The local vegetation evolved to a mixture of prairie and oak woodlands by 10,000 years ago, at which point the continental ice sheet had retreated to the southern edge of Lake Superior. The Mt. Vernon landscape had almost certainly assumed its present form by this time.



Right:  
*Alfred and Ernest  
Lehnherr at  
Devil's Chimney  
Rock in 1934.*

Left:  
*Devil's Chimney Rock, located southeast  
of Mt. Vernon on Highway 92. Erosion  
resistant St. Peters Sandstone.  
-Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area  
Historical Society, Inc.*

The influence of modern humans on the local landscape has overwhelmed the more gradual natural processes described above. Agricultural and construction activities that strip vegetation from slopes have increased soil erosion rates at near 100 times above their natural levels. Water and wind erosion now remove soil from fields far more quickly than natural processes can replace it, although modern farming practices and stricter government regulation of construction sites have reduced the unsustainable loss of soil to levels only several times higher than the replacement rate. Contamination of the sub surface water that feeds streams, ponds, and wells in the area and is stored in the thick underlying rock layers is a continual concern, with the vast majority of such contamination occurring from agricultural chemicals, fertilizers, and manure. Finally, mankind's most profound influence on the landscape, suburban-style tract housing that subjugates the entire landscape to lawns, houses, and driveways, is creeping toward Mt. Vernon as inexorably as glaciers once did.

Submitted by Chuck DeMets  
Professor of Geology and Geophysics  
U. W. Madison, Wisconsin



## THE BIG SPRING

The "Big Spring" has been called such since the 1800's. The first settlers chose to settle near the spring because of the availability of fresh running water. The Big Spring was a favorite spot for summer picnics and gatherings, probably because it was a cool and peaceful place. The spring water was cold, and the rocks and many trees near the spring kept the area refreshingly cool. The Coronet Band and the Choir gave concerts at afternoon picnic gatherings at the spring, and the entire town would attend these events.

The spring is a natural fountain of water which flows from the ground in a steady stream. The Big Spring is located upstream and northwest of Mt. Vernon. Since springs are especially common at the foot of a cliff or slope, we only have to look at the "Big Rock" which is in the same area and decide for ourselves as to why there is a "Big Spring". The temperature of a spring depends on the temperature of the rocks

through which its water has flowed. The water from the Big Spring is cold in winter and summer, therefore the water comes from farther down. The steady stream of cold water coming from the Big Spring has made the Mt. Vernon Creek one of the best trout streams in all of Wisconsin. The trout thrive in cool clear water with a gravel bottom where the current is strong and there are rapids and deep pools.

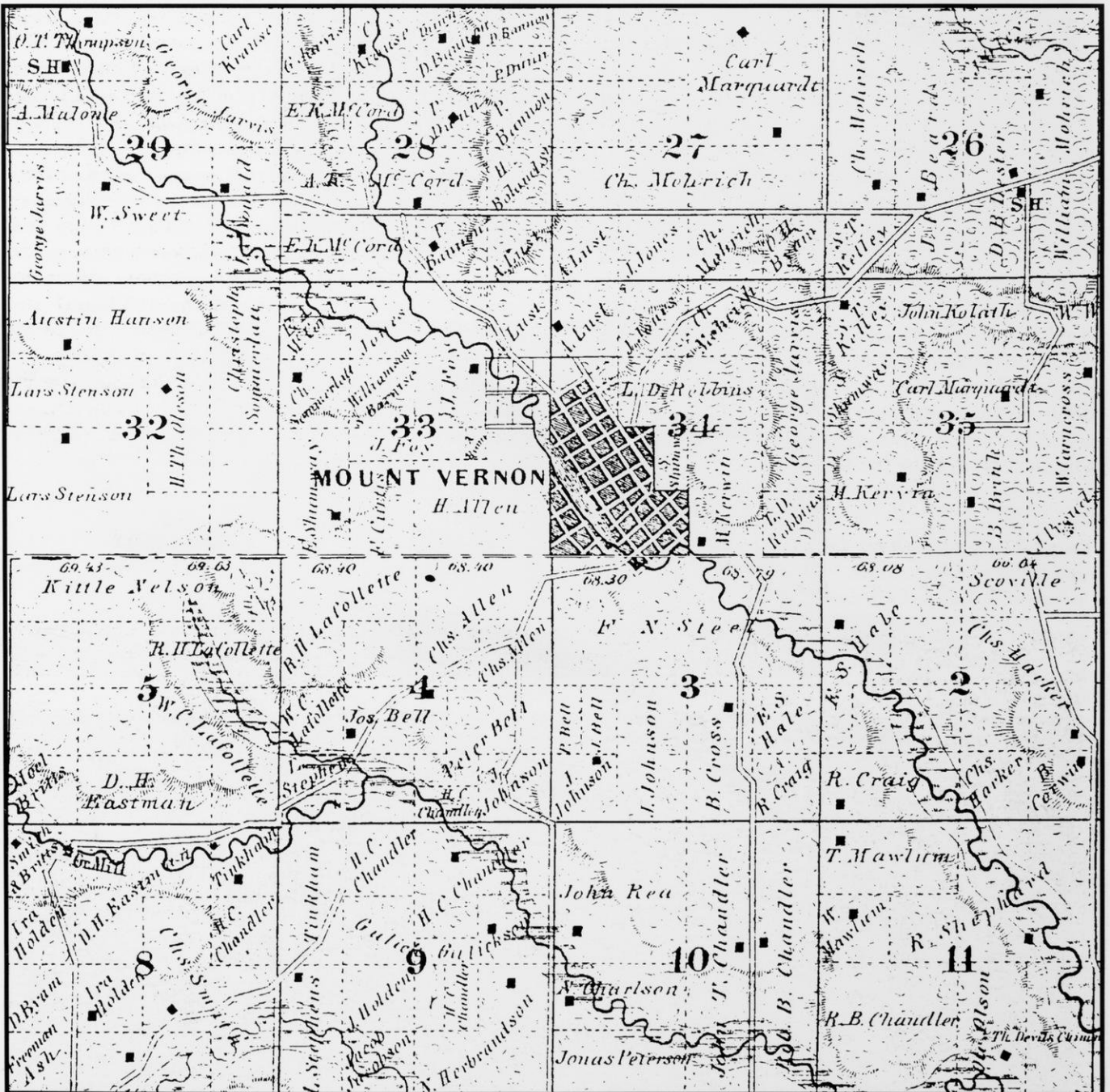
It was near the Big Spring, that the first home was built in Mt. Vernon. It provided fresh water at no cost. The Big Spring and the creek provided ample water for a dam that was built to provide water power. With fish a plenty, young chaps could break off a willow branch, tie a line to one end, attach a hook, bait the hook and head for the river bank. Today, fishermen come to Mt. Vernon during the fishing season in hopes of landing some "big game." Have you seen the Big Spring? If not, why not pick a sunny afternoon, grab a snack, wander up the stream and visualize it's wonders yourself.

Below: A summer picnic at the Big Spring with the Mt. Vernon Coronet Band in the 1890's.  
-Courtesy of Bernice Moore.



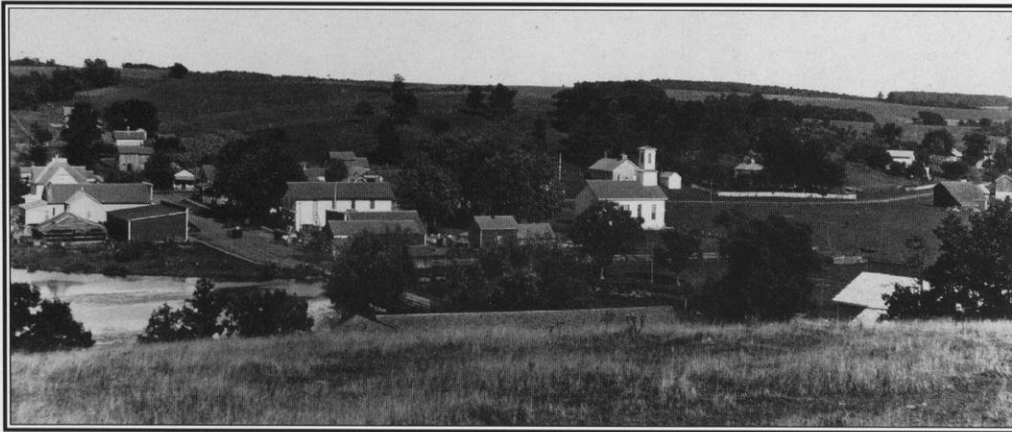
SPRINGDALE TOWNSHIP

1868

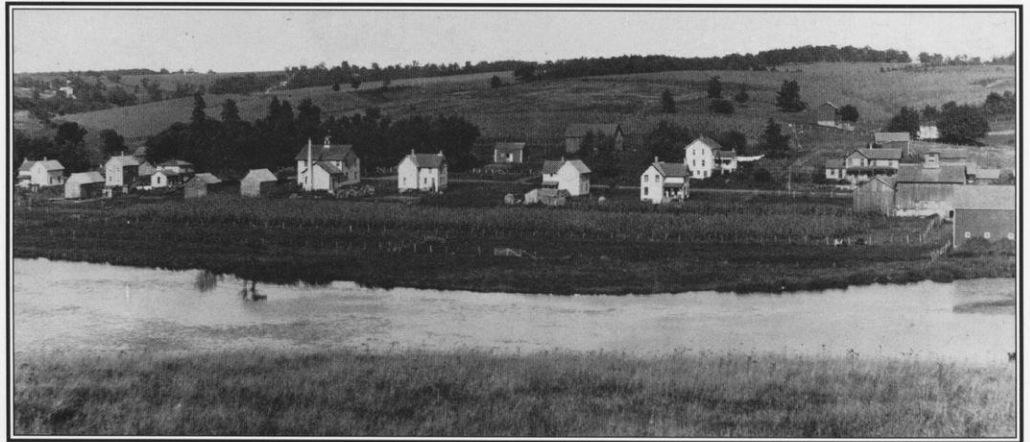


PRIMROSE TOWNSHIP

Above: Sections 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 35 of the Springdale Township plat map, together with sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 of the Primrose Township plat map, showing Mt. Vernon situated on the border. Both maps are from 1868. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.



Left:  
*Looking east from the top of  
the Mill Hill circa 1906.  
-Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb  
Area Historical Society, Inc.*



Right:  
*Looking east across the Mill  
Pond circa 1906.  
-Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb  
Area Historical Society, Inc.*



Left:  
*The Chandler Store in 1908  
was located on Main Street  
(now Davis St.) on the  
south side of the street.  
-Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb  
area Historical Society, Inc.*



## RESIDENTS OF THE PAST

The year was 1831, when Eldred Hale and his brother, traveled through what now is the town of Mt. Vernon, on their way from Wiota to Fort Winnebago (now Portage), with a load of goods to make a final payment to the Winnebago natives for their lands. The route through the Mt. Vernon area was a mere footpath at the time. The first pioneer family to settle in the Mt. Vernon area was the George Patchin family who traveled here in 1846 by wagon from Ohio. Their cabin was built near the Big Spring because wood and water were necessary for existence, and here they were both plentiful. On December 22, 1846, their son, David Patchin, was born. It was in 1847 that Joel Britts came to Primrose and acquired 200 acres of land including the present site of Mt. Vernon. In 1849, George Britts built a water powered saw mill. The Britts family had originated in the state of Virginia, and named their new home in Wisconsin after Mt. Vernon, Virginia. George Britts platted the village of Mt. Vernon in the years 1850 and 1851, and built a home. It was built on the farm now owned by William & Cindi Haack. In 1852, Dr. P. Byam obtained possession of the village site and much of the adjoining land. Because of dishonest marketing and deceptive land sale practices, the Byam family was thrown

out of town in 1859. In 1858, the original grist mill was built by Edward Britts and Charles Smith. The grist mill was a valuable addition to the town as it brought farmers from long distances into town to have their grains milled. They would then make purchases at the stores and business in Mt. Vernon, and would stay overnight in the hotel.

In 1852 there were only 12 families in Mt. Vernon. By 1880 there were over 100 inhabitants. Many businesses were operated by the early village residents. Hall C. Chandler built the first general store in 1848. John Jones Sr. kept the first hotel and later operated the grist mill. His hotel stood where Harland Erfurth's garage now stands. The hotel served pioneer teamsters hauling lead ore with ox teams from the mines of southwestern Wisconsin to Milwaukee. Mr. C. W. Karn operated the grist mill after Jones, and Karn then made several improvements to the mill. In 1852, Mr. Charles. C. Allen built and operated the Hotel De Allen, with a saloon and a stable on the west side of the river. Before the Civil War, William W. Minor had a boot and leather goods shop where he did his own tanning,

Below: *The Mt. Vernon Creamery located on the corner of Washington and 2nd Streets circa 1890. Later converted to the Dance. Hall.  
-Courtesy of The Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*





1852

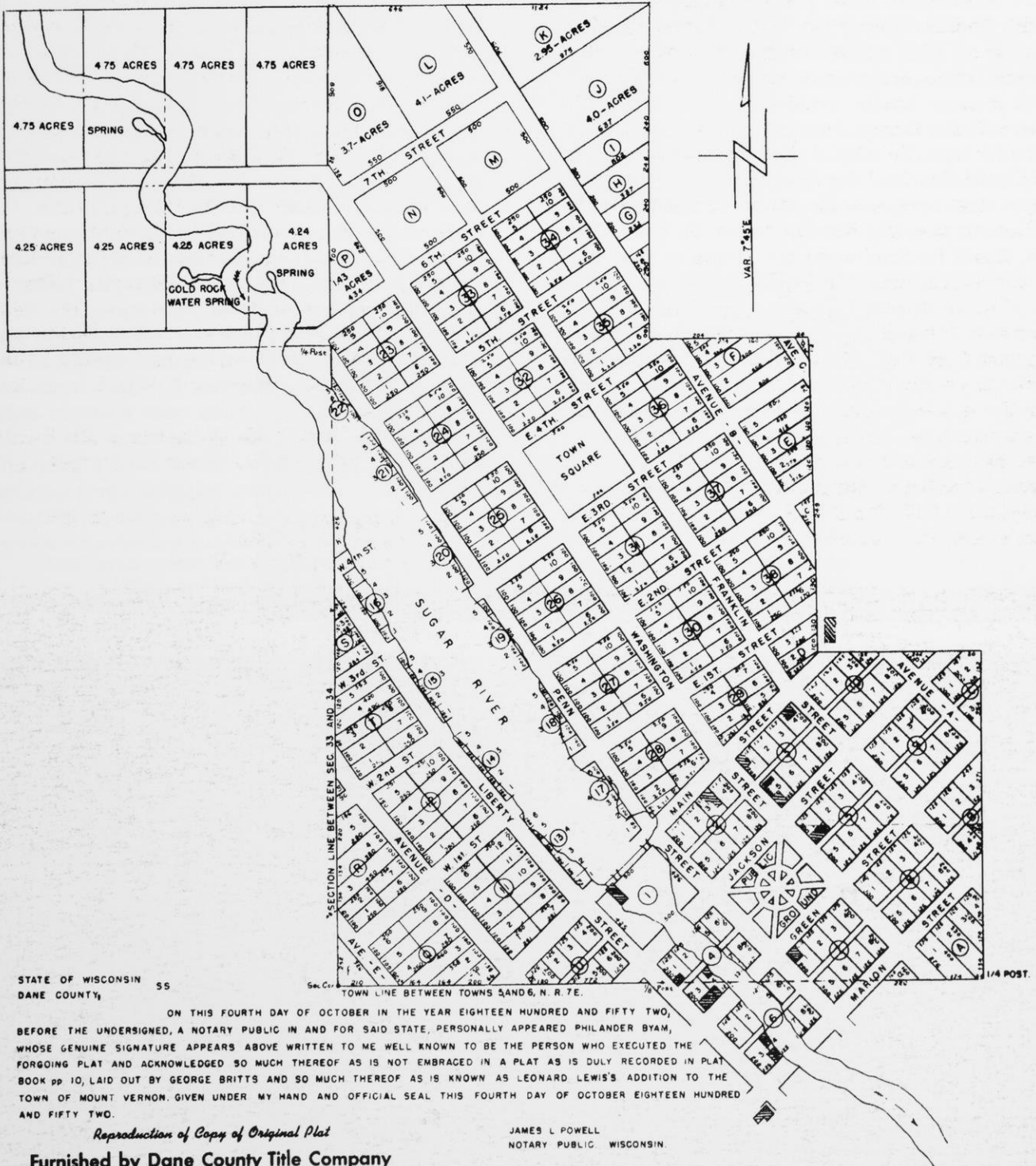
# MOUNT VERNON

WITH BYAM'S ADDITION DANE COUNTY, WIS.

RECORDED OCT 9, 1852.

SCALE 1"=400LINKS

E. MILLER C.E.



STATE OF WISCONSIN 55  
DANE COUNTY,

ON THIS FOURTH DAY OF OCTOBER IN THE YEAR EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY TWO, BEFORE THE UNDERSIGNED, A NOTARY PUBLIC IN AND FOR SAID STATE, PERSONALLY APPEARED PHILANDER BYAM, WHOSE GENUINE SIGNATURE APPEARS ABOVE WRITTEN TO ME WELL KNOWN TO BE THE PERSON WHO EXECUTED THE FORGOING PLAT AND ACKNOWLEDGED SO MUCH THEREOF AS IS NOT EMBRACED IN A PLAT AS IS DULY RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK pp 10, LAID OUT BY GEORGE BRITTS AND SO MUCH THEREOF AS IS KNOWN AS LEONARD LEWIS'S ADDITION TO THE TOWN OF MOUNT VERNON. GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND OFFICIAL SEAL THIS FOURTH DAY OF OCTOBER EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY TWO.

*Reproduction of Copy of Original Plat*

**Furnished by Dane County Title Company**

JAMES L POWELL  
NOTARY PUBLIC WISCONSIN

*-Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

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## EARLY PIONEERS

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and there was also an Erick Erickson who made shoes. John Dick had a shoe shop in 1867. It stood where Libby Sherwood now lives. Mr. William. W. Abbot ran a blacksmith shop from 1852 until the 1880's. It stood on the spot where H.C. Erfurth later had a slaughter house. In 1868, Andrew Peterson owned a blacksmith shop with Pete Peterson operating it some years later. Moses Way operated a restaurant, and he ran a barber shop, and in 1895 he sold his shops to Jason Black. Clark Lewis and John Korner were carpenters, and P. E. Call had a harness shop and made saddles. M. F. Van Norman was a live stock buyer, and George Wade was a butcher. William J. Donald was the first doctor in town in 1863, and Issac G. Brader kept a general store and served as postmaster in 1872.

The early plat of the village of Mt. Vernon that was drawn up by George Britts in 1851, and expanded upon later by Dr. P. Byam, once boasted of thirty or more town blocks, with streets bearing the names of such revolutionary heroes as, Franklin, Washington and Jackson, among others. The main road, running north to south through the town, now highway 92, was appropriately named Washington Street. The main business street, running east and west was known as

Main street. The public square was bounded by Washington, Jackson, Penn, and Green Streets. The town was originally to have had two public squares, according to the plat map. It was in 1880, that construction of the railroad west of Madison was begun. The railway ended up taking a path through Verona, Riley, Klevenville and Mt. Horeb, bypassing Mt. Vernon. This affected the future growth of Mt. Vernon as some merchants moved to where the railroad was more accessible. Today, only one public square actually exists, the Forest of Fame Park. Many of the 30 town blocks originally platted were never built. The Mt. Vernon plat, as printed in an 1873 plat book, also listed the following people as businessmen: William H. Brunneil, blacksmith and machinist; John McGregor, blacksmith and farrier; Patrick Carr, dry goods and groceries, boots, shoes and crockery; Andrew Peterson, blacksmith and machinist; Michael Johnson and John Eggum, farmers and stock growers, and A. O. Lee, cabinet maker.

In 1877, Onon B. Dahle moved to Mt. Vernon from Daleyville and took over the Brader store

Below: *Gathering of the Ladies Aid of the Baptist Church circa 1890's.*

*-Courtesy of Bernice Moore.*



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## EARLY PIONEERS

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and Postmaster position. He had previously built a store in Daleyville after finding his fortune in gold in California. In 1887, his son, Herman, went to Mt. Horeb and started the Dahle Brothers store there. Herman later became a congressman serving the 2nd district. In 1878, F. A. Fix opened a saloon and hotel. A. D. Coleman also came to Mt. Vernon in 1878. He was a carriage and wagon manufacturer, repairer and painter until 1884. Harry Watt was a cheesemaker and Stephan W. Ellis came to town as a general merchant in 1879. John Barness opened a furniture store and made coffins in 1884. The clerk at the school was E. C. Pierce for many years, and later, Luther D. Robbins looked after the school finances, as well as building cabinets and coffins on the side. Stephen Foye & sons, Carl Neihus and Carl Erfurth did mason work, and Carl Bieri was a cheesemaker who also made Swiss cow bells. Ray Morris operated a store for a time, and a Litheuser also ran a general store. Otto Sundquist was a carpenter, and Frank Coward had a shoe shop. In 1886, there was a James Haines who dealt in lumber, coal and machinery. Gust Huebbe had a harness making shop, and Jim Smith had a store on the site of the building now occupied by the Stapelmann family. Warren Chandler was a stock buyer, and Tom Everill printed a newspaper called the Mt. Vernon Enterprise in 1891. Otto Hacker opened a barber shop on the corner where Sparky's Bar now stands, and there was C. J. Weltzin who ran a general store and pulled teeth part time. In 1893, the creamery was sold

to Frank Moore, Jr. for \$2,500.00. The newspaper reported that he would charge 1 1/2 cents for making cheese and 3 3/4 cents for butter, and 2 cents per 100 pounds milk rent.

In the early 1900's, Emil Koch operated an implement business at the sight of the present J & W Bar, and August and Herbert Koch operated a department and grocery store at the site of the apartment house that is next to the bar. Across Main Street from the Koch brothers stores, Will and Burt Chandler had a large general store. The Sinako brothers later operated this store, at which time it burnt down. George and Herman Lee sold machinery at the site of Harland Erfurth's garage. The telephone company was started in 1901 by the Moore brothers, William and Frank. John C. Gunderson operated a general store from 1918 to 1923. George Orr built the grist mill as it now stands. Fred and Ferdinand Koch operated the mill for many years, selling it to Herbert Hankel in 1946. Waldo Disch took over the mill in 1953.

In 1946, when Mt. Vernon celebrated its 100th anniversary, some of the prominent businessmen were, Andrew Nelson, who kept the store, Herbert Hankel, who operated the mill, and Miner Marty, who was a blacksmith. The two garage owners were Rodney Kollath and Alfred Eggimann. H. C. Erfurth was an auctioneer, and one tavern was run by Eli Kobbervig and the other by Louise Eggimann. And, of course, there were many local farmers. It was their patronage for the previous 100 years that had kept all of these Mt. Vernon shopkeepers in business.



Left:

*Looking north from the corner of Main and Washington Streets in 1909. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



**MOUNT VERNON - BY DR. W. J. DONALD, 1877**

The following description of Mt. Vernon was written by Dr. W. J. Donald and included in the book titled, "History of Madison, Dane County and Surroundings," published by WM. J. Park & Co. in 1877. Dr. Donald wrote;

*"This village, of about one hundred inhabitants, is situated on the middle branch of the Sugar river, nineteen miles southwest of Madison. The location is a pleasant one, the greater part being on the East bank of the river, while on the west side, some high rocks and hills add to the picturesqueness of the scenery. On one of these rocks grew an old pine tree that was an ancient landmark to the early settlers, and a noted object of interest to visitors because of its marked distinction from all surroundings. It was blown down by a wind-storm on the evening of January 1, 1876.*

*The surrounding country, though rolling, is productive, and well adapted to the raising of stock and dairy purposes, and inhabited by a thrifty class of farmers, mostly of German and Norwegian origin.*

*The health of the place is excellent, with a remarkable exemption from epidemics, particularly scarlet fever, and cases of ague are rare.*

*Two religious societies are here represented, Baptist and Methodist. The Baptists have a good church edifice. The Methodists hold service in the school-house, a good stone building.*

*The never failing Sugar river affords two excellent water powers, with only one, as yet, improved. Its distance from Madison and other villages makes it a good point for business of all kinds; not one, in truth, can be said to be overdone. Those in business here have been, in most every instance, successful, and have continued residents of the place for many years. Mr. John Jones, proprietor of the flouring mill, learned his business here, and afterward became partner, and again eight years ago, proprietor, while he now rents the mill to C. W. Karn. Mr. I. G. Brader, Sr., who keeps an excellent general store, has been in business, with a little exception, for the past eighteen years, and has held the office of postmaster continuously since 1856. Mr. C. C. Allen furnishes a good hotel, and lately erected new buildings for the better accommodation of the traveling public.*

*Dr. William J. Donald, after a year's respite from business, is at his post again, as in the past eleven years. Mr. W. W. Abbott, blacksmith, and C. J. Lewis, builder and carpenter, have been residents of the place for the past twenty-five years, and in active business. Among others doing business and generally prospering may be mentioned: Foye and Rea, masons; W. W. Miner, boots and shoes; M. F. Van Norman, live stock buyer; Andrew Peterson, blacksmith; Erick Erickson, shoemaker; P. E. Call, saddler; F. A. Fix, hotel and saloon; George Wade, butcher; C. H. Lewis, carpenter; A. C. Brader, clerk; I. G. and A. C. Brader were in the mercantile business until two years ago. I. G. Brader, Jr., removed to Iowa, but has recently returned, and built himself a residence, and expects to resume business soon."*

Right:

*View looking west up Main Street (now Davis St.) toward the Mill Dam with the Mill Hill in the distance. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*





## THE PATCHIN FAMILY

The first immigrant pioneer settlers in the Mt. Vernon area were the Patchin family. George Patchin and his wife, Sophronia Nash Patchin, traveled from Ohio in the spring of 1846 to the Mt. Vernon area. They made the trip by lumber wagon before settling close by the "Big Spring" in Mt. Vernon. They built a cabin and later exchanged the property for that of Philaner Nash's in Primrose township, which later became the Josiah La Follette property.

In the "Story of Primrose Township", written in 1895 by Albert Barton, George Patchin's son writes an eloquent account of life in the area. W.W. Patchin writes,

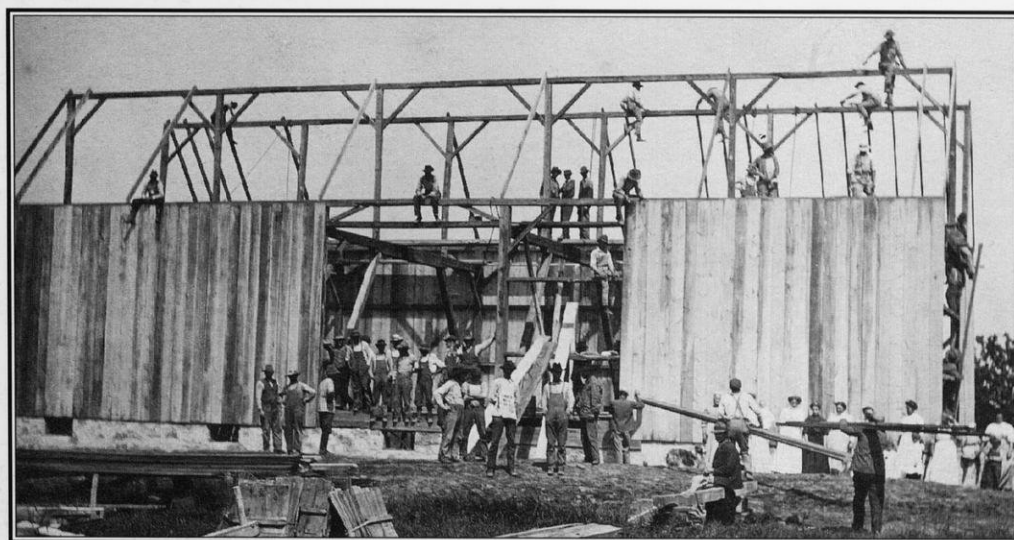
*"One pleasant feature of pioneer life was the fraternal disposition of the settlers. This was shown especially in the matter of cabin building. Cabin buildings were usually most jolly seasons. The settlers welcomed the new arrival by helping him build his cabin and were glad of an opportunity to get together and help each other. In building, four good men, skilled with axes, stood on the growing building, rising log by log, one at each corner, to flatten and fit each his end of the log. During and after the raising there was generally, considerable fun in one way or another, and afterward a lunch if circumstances were at all favorable."*

At one cabin raising on a warm day Patchin recalled that so many of the men suffered from fever that they could hardly lift the logs. But as

dinner was brought to the men, the cook was heard to remark, "Boys there's no problem with your lifting now." One day was all that was required to raise a cabin. Over the years the neighbors continued to rely on one another. Harvesting crops, threshing and barn raising, brought neighbors together and made the hardest of jobs a lot easier.

## THE BYAM EPISODE

The Byam family of Mt. Vernon will stand out in village history for the colorful shenanigans that they brought to the area. Dr. Philander Byam and his two brothers sold patent rights for butter churns, and buggy springs. Many of the local farmers of the area were taken into their bogus scheme and lost money in the dealings. The Byams also owned land in the area. They went to Brockland, New York and sold village lots at vastly inflated prices by showing pictures that misrepresented the properties. Pictures of Mt. Vernon with a steamboat in a large river were shown to prospective buyers. One eastern family, the Tilton's, bought property in the village for \$1,200, sight unseen. On the night of October 24, 1859, local townspeople sick of the antics of the Byams, took the law into their own hands and drove the unsavory Byams from the area. A band of nearly seventy people, led by R.B. Chandler, rallied and marched to Mt. Vernon determined to oust the brothers. They marched to the home of Dr. Byam, just south of the mill, and called out for Dr. Byam, who sent his wife out instructing

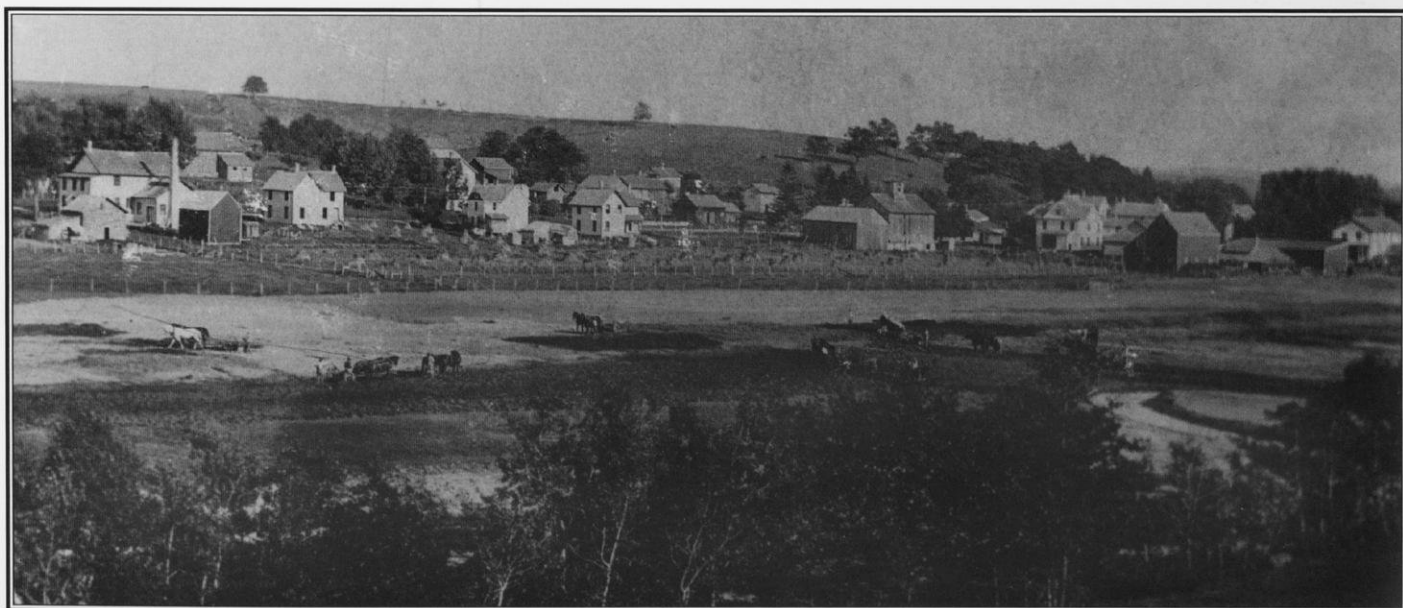


Left:

*A community barn raising near Mt. Vernon circa 1910. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

her to tell the mob he wasn't home. The mob however, knowing that the Doctor was in, began to tear down the house using axes and crowbars. Finally the doctor made his presence known by yelling out, "If it weren't for the infant in the cradle here, a half dozen of you would be lying dead out there." Mr. Chandler yelled back, "Mr. Byam will you please come down and go with us over to the mill, we're going to hold a meeting there." After pledging that no harm would befall him, Byam was persuaded to go with the group. At the mill a trial was held and it was decided that Dr. Byam and his brothers would have to leave. Col. Kelly of Mt. Vernon declared, "Now Mr. Byam, and that means every Byam in Mt. Vernon, there is one of two things you can do, either leave Mt. Vernon, every soul of you, inside of 24 hours, or stay and be hanged." A brother who lived in a cabin by the "Big Rock" received tar and feathering that night. The next morning the Byams hired teams and wisely moved to Madison. One of the brothers did return to the area for a load of hay, but on the top of the Mill Hill he was apprehended and the wagon and hay was set on fire, causing quite a spectacle. In 1860, the Byams decided to sue the townspeople involved in the incidence and filed a suite for \$10,000 dollars. The case ended in acquittal for the defendants, but the townspeople did have to pay the court costs of \$78.26.

Below: *Dredging the Mill Pond with horses and wheel scrapers when the Koch brothers operated the mill in 1919. -Courtesy of Herbert Hankel.*



## MARY ADILINER'S BIBLE

*By William "Pete" Way*

It seems history can go back a long way. Where do I start? How about Grandma Mitchell's bible? My mother gave it to me for safe keeping several years ago, and I treasure it deeply. It holds the 23rd Psalm that Grandma recited to us often and taught to us children as we were growing up. She's been gone for 25 years now and was 100 years old when she passed away. Mt. Vernon was just 25 years old when she was born. Grandma kept part of our family history in her bible, and in it I found the birth dates of her parents and other family members who were all born in the early 1800s and who all played a role in the history of Mt. Vernon.

Her father, Eldred S. Hale, was born on April 13, 1816. In a book titled, "The Story of Primrose Township", published in 1895, my Great-grandfather, Eldred, told the story of how he first came to Mt. Vernon and what life was like then. He was said to be the first immigrant settler to have visited Mt. Vernon in 1831. Here is what he wrote in 1895:

*"My father was drawn to the lead regions of northern Illinois and was killed by the Indians there in the Blackhawk War of 1832. I served in Fort Wiota as a guard of the women and children during that war. The year before this (1831), I made a wagon trip with my brother, "Wash", from Wiota to Fort Winnebago (now the city of Portage). We went*

over the present road leading from Mt. Vernon to Postville which was then only an Indian trail and carried with us a load of goods for the Indians and our last payment for their lands. We camped out wherever night overtook us, propping up our wagon pole with a stick and throwing a canvas over it for a tent. We came back around Lake Mendota at Madison, the region being then, of course, a wilderness. Madison had then contained only one building, a small double log cabin occupied by a Frenchman and his wife.

I brought the first span of horses to Primrose, I believe. We had no roads in those days, of course, but we got along anyway, all we needed was an ax to cut our way thorough the woods and a spade for cutting down the embankments of the streams and crossing. Wood and water determined cabin locations. Destructive prairie fires would sweep over the country. Game, especially of the smaller kind, was exceedingly plentiful, so much so that I have seen small knolls covered with rabbits and other game during the progress of a prairie fire. Roving bands of Indians were quite numerous at first, but they gave us little trouble.

The Indians all knew us as Hale brothers and were afraid of us as they knew we hated them for killing our father. Once in the early days, my brother, Wash, saw an Indian chasing a deer over the hill past my cabin here. He took down his rifle and went out to meet him, but the Indian was afraid and fled back westwards. "Wash" followed him until he reached

their camp on the Barton farm. He walked right into camp with his rifle on his shoulder and told the Indians they must get out. They feared us and in a day or two, were gone."

The stories kept in my Grandmother's Bible also tell that Eldred Hale's wife and my Great-grandmother, Mary Jones Hale, was born on May 11, 1832, and died 90 years later on March 20, 1922. Her family also played an important role in the history of Mt. Vernon. She was born in Wales and came to America in 1843. Her father, John Jones, operated the first hotel in Mt. Vernon, serving pioneer teamsters hauling lead ore with ox teams from the mines of southwestern Wisconsin to Milwaukee. She and Eldred were among the first settlers in the town of Primrose. When she died in 1922, an era died with her.

My Great-grandparents lived in very exciting, yet difficult times. The Winnebago, who had occupied the land for hundreds of years, had agreed to sell the first part of their land in 1829. They soon found out that this meant they would have to leave. Fear and distrust separated the Winnebago from the settlers and intensified the kind of hatred my Great-grandfather felt toward them for having lost his father in the Blackhawk Wars. The settlers did not comprehend the hardships that the native people faced having to leave their ancestral homes forever. Unfortunately, my Grandmother's Bible does not record the births

Below: *An early Arbor Day celebration in Mt. Vernon, circa 1910. The Baptist Church and the grist mill are in the background.*  
-Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.





and deaths of the Native American families who lived on the branch of the Sugar River at the site of Mt. Vernon before my Great-grandfather arrived. But, it is important that we today, do remember the very first inhabitants of the Mt. Vernon area and perceive the hardships that they were forced into by the immigrant settlement of the area.

### **MT. VERNON CIVIL WAR CONNECTION**

On April 24th, 1861, James H. Smith enlisted in the Union Army. He had been serving as Mt. Vernon's Post Master. On May 24th of the same year, three others from the Mt. Vernon area signed up to serve in the Union cause. William Minor, a tanner, curer and shoemaker in the village, Henry A. Smith, and William E. Moon would join James Smith and go on to fight with the 2nd Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. They all held the distinction of being chosen to serve in an elite section of the regiment called the "Randall Guards," which would be similar to the Green Berets of our time. All but William E. Moon returned from the war, no small feat in a regiment that lost nearly one fifth of its enrollment in battle or to disease.

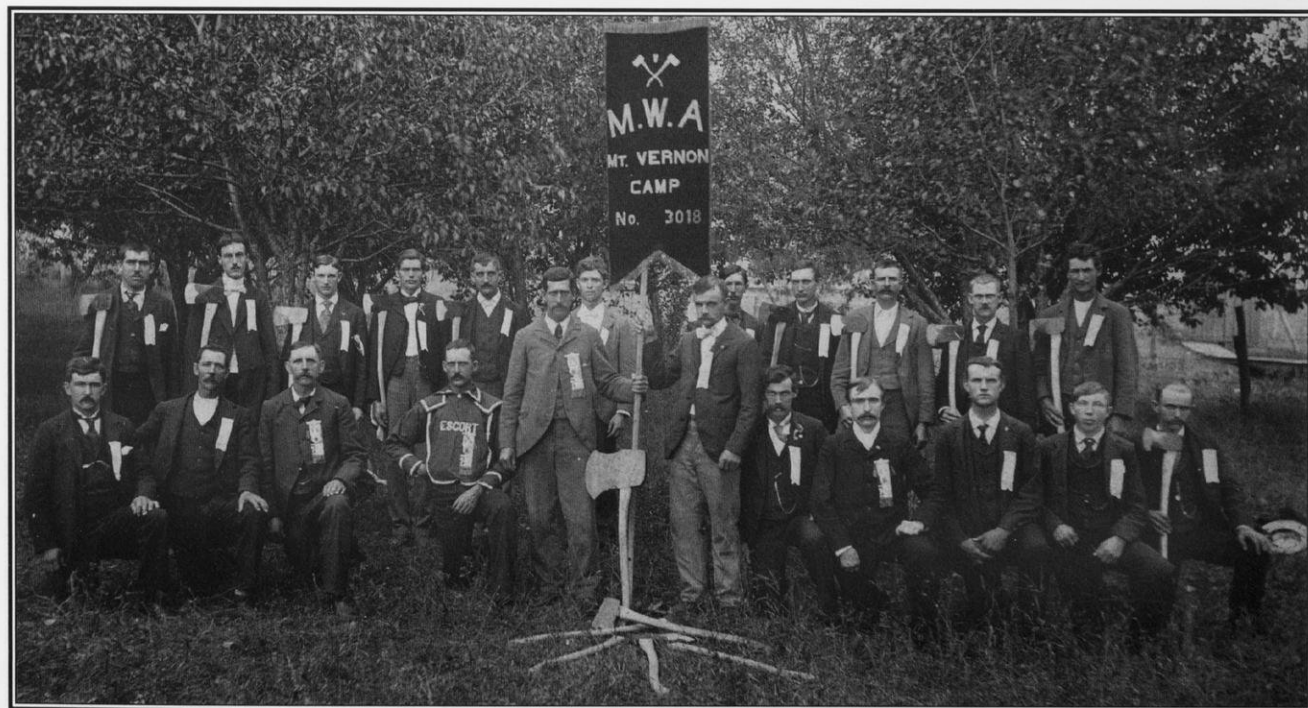
William Minor was 41 years of age when he enlisted. He left a wife and three children when

he entered the service to go to the far away battlefields of Bull Run, Gainesville, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. After the battle of Gettysburg, Minor was one of only 69 able body men left from the regiment to fight. He went on to fight in the battle of the "Wilderness," a battle in which every officer in the regiment was either killed or incapacitated. Minor himself lost a leg in the battle, and mustered out while resting in a hospital in September of 1864.

Henry Smith also left a wife and two sons behind to go to war, and James Smith, who was a Sergeant Major, was the only one of the four to rise above the rank of private. William Moon, a schoolteacher in Primrose, was the only casualty of the four, he died in the battle at Gainesville. He, like so many others, had enlisted for three years, or the duration of the war. Most thought the war would be short lived, but, the war dragged on for what must have seemed an eternity. What was short lived however, were the lives of many thousands of men thrown into battle.

Although not part of the elite Randall Guards, many other Mt. Vernon area men enlist-

Below: *The Mt. Vernon camp of the Modern Woodmen of America. A fraternal insurance organization circa 1900.* -Courtesy of Bernice Moore.





ed in the War between the States. Lawrence Post, a Primrose farmer, enlisted on April 26th of 1861 and was part of the "Iron Brigade." Thirteen men from the area joined the Company K of the 33rd Regiment in August of 1862, some names in this group included Billings Lewis, Septimius Ireland, (a pump maker from the area), and two members of the Jeins family. The Webber family had the distinction of having a grandfather, a father and two sons all serve in the war. The youngest, George, was also the youngest Wisconsin soldier in the war, serving at the age of 14.

### **JOHN SWEET DONALD AND**

### **ROBERT M. LA FOLLETTE**

Two well known politicians had their roots in the Mt. Vernon area. John Donald from Springdale township, and Robert La Follette from Primrose township would both go on to become influential in state and national politics. Both belonged to the Republican party and each held the other in high esteem. John Donald was a champion of agricultural issues and was the Father of the "Good Road Movement" in Wisconsin. Robert La Follette was the head of the "progressive" wing of the Republican party in Wisconsin.

Robert M. La Follette was born in 1855 and raised on a farm near Mt. Vernon in the town of Primrose, where he lived until 1873. He was elected as a Dane County District Attorney, and later elected by the state of Wisconsin to the U. S. House of Representatives from 1885 to 1891. He held the office of Governor of Wisconsin from 1900 to 1904, and was elected to the U. S. Senate in 1905 to 1925. In 1924, he ran as an independent Progressive candidate for U. S. President. He garnered nearly six million votes.

La Follette was head of the "Progressive" faction in the Republican Party and throughout his political career he fought the big "Party Bosses" and remained a vital force among Republicans. He had ties with the Mt. Vernon area and was remembered even as a school boy as being an influential speaker, and an energetic youth. When he was in his teenage years, a spirited horse race was run between young Bob La Follette and Ike Brader through the town of Mt. Vernon. Bob pitted his favorite mare against Brader's prize-stepper in a race. Although La Follette lost the race, the event was a thrilling

spectacle for the crowd that witnessed it.

On July 5, 1880, Bob La Follette made Mt. Vernon history when he was the orator during the Independence Day celebration. He was preparing to become a candidate for District Attorney, his first political race. The event took place in Way's Grove on top of Mt. Vernon's Mill Hill on the Springdale-Primrose Town Line. The speaker platform was located on the Springdale side of the road. When La Follette heard of the location he insisted that the platform be extended across the road so that he could speak from his native Primrose Township. Robert La Follette showed evidence early in his political career of his flair for dramatics. His speech was said to have won the hearts of the big crowd that witnessed the event. It was remembered that La Follette walked around the platform a great deal while speaking and often referred to the "revolution". La Follette probably spoke of "the home as the foundation of the state," as he often spoke of this during his early career. His unique style of oratory would earn him the nicknames of "Fighting Bob," and "Battling Bob" La Follette. Robert La Follette died in 1925, while serving in the office of U. S. Senator.

John Sweet Donald was born in a log cabin near Mt. Vernon, in the township of Springdale, near what is now Highway 92. He was born to John Strong Donald and Ellen Sweet Donald. His father died before he was born, and he was raised by his mother and step-father, John Jones, Jr. on a forty acre parcel his grandfather, the Rev. James Donald had acquired from the State. In 1893, at the age of 23, John served as assessor for the town of Springdale, and from 1899-1902, he served as the Springdale Town Chairman. In 1902, Donald ran for, and was elected to, the State Assembly on the Republican ticket, a seat he would hold for 4 years. After his two terms in the assembly, Donald ran successfully for two terms in the State Senate, from 1908 until 1912. Donald then served two terms as the Secretary of State of Wisconsin, from 1912 until 1920.

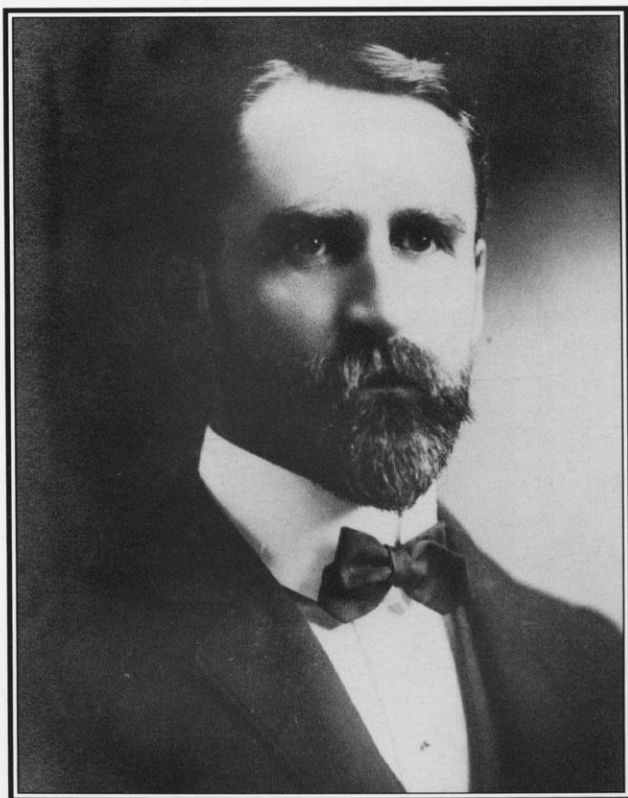
During his long and distinguished political career, Donald championed many causes for the good of his constituents. He supported the Railroad Compensation Bill, Workman's Compensation Bill, Grain Inspection Bill, the Primary Election Bill, as well as many other progressive acts of legislation. He introduced a bill prohibiting large telephone companies from monopolizing and unfairly cutting their rates,

thus, possibly forcing small independent companies, such as the Mount Vernon Telephone Company, out of business. In the area of consumer protection he was chair of the committee that drafted the Pure Food Laws, protecting public health as well as Weights and Measures laws protecting consumers against fraud. He chaired the Education Committee and served on the Public Welfare committee. Although all of these progressive bills would earn Donald the respect and admiration of his constituents, as well as his peers, it was another bill that Donald would best be remembered for.

John Donald is often called the "Father of Good Road Laws" for the work he accomplished on Wisconsin's "Good Roads Bill." Before the introduction of this bill, Wisconsin's roads were cared for by a patchwork of farmers maintaining their own roadways. Good roads were a necessity

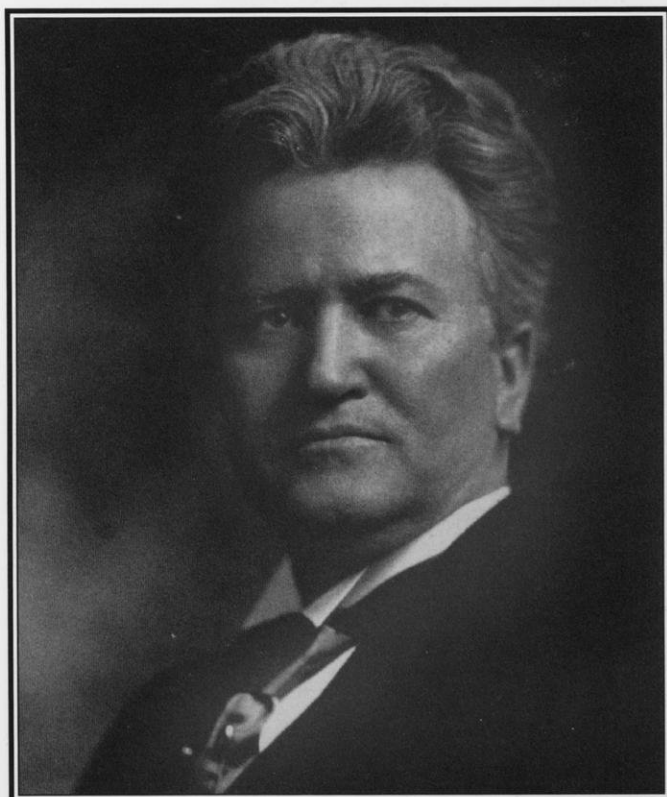
to get goods to market. This bill gave state aid to highways and created a highway commission to secure funds to build and maintain the State Highway System. This legislation was referred to as the Donald Bill.

John Donald was also an active voice in the advancement of agriculture. Donald's farms in Springdale were models of success due in great part to John Donald's innovations in new farming practices. He worked to pioneer the keeping of farm records, writing two sets of farm records books. His slogan, "A farm without records is like a clock without hands," would be the motto of many a successful farmer. His involvement in agriculture would reach as far as serving as President of the State Livestock Breeders, President of Friends of our Native Landscape, and Secretary of Dane County's Agricultural Society.



Above: John S. Donald, 1869-1934. "Father of the Good Road Laws," and champion of agricultural advancements. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.

Below: Robert M. La Follette, 1855-1925. Served as a congressional and senatorial representative for Wisconsin, and as Governor of Wisconsin from 1900 to 1904. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.



## DOCTORS WHO SERVED MT. VERNON

Many family doctors have set up their practices in the Mt. Vernon area over the years. Doctors such as Dr. William J. Donald, Dr. C. E. Sole in 1892, and Dr. Lewis in 1897, all served the area residents well. Doctor Donald practiced for 15 years in Mt. Vernon. In 1884, Dr. N. H. Goodenow moved his office from the Hotel De Allen to the Andrew Peterson residence, next to the creamery. There was also Dr. Osborne, who came from the west and lived and had his office with Mr. and Mrs. John Korner. Doctor Sweat and Dr. Sowle lived in the house once owned by Arthur Moore. Doctor James M. Kelly lived near what was once the Kelly Hill Cheese Factory, and later moved his practice into Mt. Vernon. There was once a Dr. Evans who also administered to the people of Mt. Vernon in the traditional country doctor fashion. Doctor E. E. McPeek practiced in Mt. Vernon in 1886, and for some years his slogan was, "Any calls promptly attended to, day or nite."

The Mt. Horeb Times newspaper reported in 1895, "Typhoid fever is setting in quite thick at present, Dr. McPeek kept busy day and night with the sick." In 1884, the newspaper reported, "Young America has been on the tare since the circus was here in spring, trying their feats on the turning pole. A number of the boys of the village were trying a trapeze performance on Sunday,

when George Brader, son of Ike Brader, was thrown from the pole and fell about ten feet and broke his left arm close to the wrist. He quietly walked to Dr. Sweat's office, who set the fracture. He never made a wimper, but stood it without a tear." Two advertisements for medicines in the Mt. Horeb Times of 1897 read: "The most pleasant little pill for regulating the bowels, are 'DeWitt's Little Early Risers'. Cure sick head-ache and constipation. Small pill, Small dose." The second ad read; "Travelers find a safe companion in 'DeWitt's Colic and Cholear Cure'. A change in drinking water and in diet often causes severe and dangerous complaints. This medicine always cures them."

Dr. H. A. Sharpe came here as a graduate to begin his practice in 1908. He lived in the Minor house and had his office there. Roger Way now owns the home. After boarding for a time with Mr. and Mrs. Carl Erfurth, Dr. Sharpe married a young woman from the city of Chicago. Making the change to a country home where she had to cook on a wood stove and carry water in a pail was a great hardship for her. She had been used to having a gas stove and running water. Dr. Sharpe died on January 20, 1940. This was a great shock to the community of Mt. Vernon.

Dr. Walter Stebbins was the local country doctor for the Mt. Vernon area from 1901 through 1908. He came to Mt. Vernon from New York, at the age of 26, to start his first medical practice.



Top right facing page:

*Dr. Walter Stebbins, Mt. Vernon doctor from 1901 to 1908. -Courtesy of Carol Olson.*

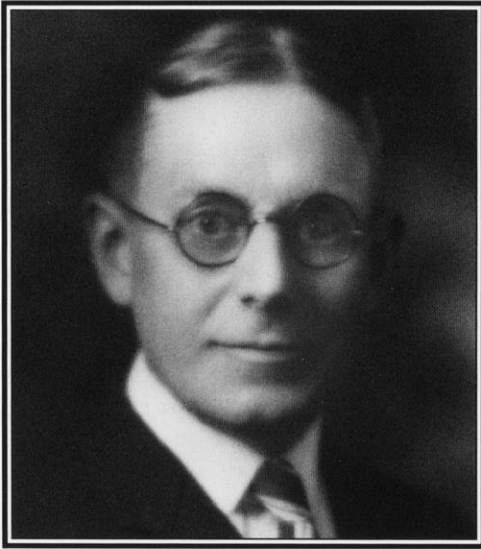
Left:

*The residence and office of Dr. H. A. Sharpe in Mt. Vernon, 1908. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

Bottom right facing page:

*Mrs. Jennie (Dievendorf) Stebbins. -Courtesy of Carol Olson.*





This was back in the days when doctors made house calls, by horse and buggy. Walter got started by leasing horses and a buggy from the local livery stable to make his rounds. In February, 1901, he married Jennie Dievendorf, whom he had met at school in New York. Their first home was over the tavern in Mt. Vernon. They received a cutter and a team of horses as a wedding gift from Jennie's family. As Walter was a city boy, he knew little about harnessing horses and had to rely on Jennie, who had a farm background, to teach him. Over time, she let Walter do the harnessing, but always had some pretext to join him in the barn to ensure that he was doing it right. She wanted to make sure that Walter would get to his destination, because the people there needed him. The roads were not nearly so good back then, in fact, the Doctor described them as being "pretty awful". He kept five horses, using one team in the morning and one in the afternoon. Sometimes he used a two-wheeled cart, but even that was often difficult because of the deep wagon tracks.

Dr. Walter Stebbins had many clients to visit and became well acquainted with the local people and the countryside. John and Vona Donald owned a large farm west of town. The first time the Stebbinses had the Donalds over for dinner, Jennie warned Walter to pay attention when dishing up the food because they were short on potatoes, and he should not dish up too much on any one plate. She knew that Walter was inclined to get wrapped up in the conversation and become over generous in serving the food. Well, this was exactly what happened again that night,

so Jennie kicked him under the table. Nothing happened, so she kicked him again a bit harder, and then again a third time. At this point, Mr. Donald said, "Doctor, I've been receiving a message under the table, and I believe it's meant for you!". Well, that broke the ice, and the two couples soon became the best of friends.

Jennie gave birth to a son, George, in 1903, who also grew up to be a doctor. In 1905, she gave birth to a daughter, Sarah (Longenecker), who is living in Madison today, a beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Sarah has memories of riding with her father when he made his rounds and of sleigh-rides to clients' homes in the winter. She became a good friend of Delma Donald (Woodburn), daughter of John and Vona Donald. She also remembers some of the houses they lived in, including the one on the east end of Mt. Vernon beyond the park. The house was on a hill on the north side of the road with a sandy playground area. The barn was across the road near the stream. Her father frequently drove the team into the stream to wash off the mud and dust at the end of the day.

The Stebbins family moved to Verona in 1909, and a daughter, Eugenia was born that year. Walter and Jennie moved to Madison in 1971. In addition to the family practice, Dr. Stebbins served as a Madison City Health Officer, and a physician for the Dane County Home in Verona. He was a member the Madison General Hospital medical staff. Dr. Walter Stebbins died in 1968, at the age of 93, after a very active life and a long medical career.





## MOUNT VERNON NEWS

In 1891, Mt. Vernon had its own newspaper, the *Mt. Vernon Enterprise*. The publisher and printer was Tom Everill. At years end in 1892, Tom Everill closed up his newspaper business. For many years the Mt. Horeb newspapers printed a regular weekly column titled *Mt. Vernon Musings*. The Mt. Horeb newspapers had four different names over the years: the *Mt. Horeb Weekly*, published from 1884 to 1887, the *Mt. Horeb Progress*, printed from 1892 to 1893, the *Mt. Horeb Times*, printed from 1894 to 1897, and the *Mt. Horeb Mail* which continues to be published today. The town of Blue Mounds, had a weekly newspaper from 1883 to 1885 called the *Blue Mounds Weekly*, which also featured Mt. Vernon news items.

The city of Verona has had a weekly paper called the Verona Press, from 1965 until present. The *Verona Press* once had a weekly column called "*Mt. Vernon News*." For this column a Mt. Vernon reporter would gather the town's weekly news, including the births and deaths, engagements, church and school notices, and social events. The news would be written up and sent to the newspapers. Few events got by the watchful eye of the town's reporter, and one could always find out who was visited by whom for dinner or socializing, or who had gone where on vacation. Also mentioned were the crop and weather reports and illnesses and accidents.

One of the reporters for the Verona paper

was Rose Rettenmund, who, in addition to her reporting duties, was active in the Zwingli Church and collected antique dishes and Hymnals. Miss Rettenmund reported from 1965 to 1968 when Mrs. Gerald Erfurth took over the duties. Two reporters for the Mt. Horeb paper were, W. A. Richards in the 1950's and Mrs. Andrew Nelson, who submitted the reports in the 1970's.

One of the Mt. Vernon news columns written in the *Mt. Horeb Progress* in 1892 described a 4th of July celebration in Mt. Vernon:

*A wagon full of ladies representing the different states and territories, drawn by a four-horse team driven by Uncle Sam, and followed by two ladies on horseback and the Mt. Vernon Coronet Band, etc., started from the town square. The whole procession reached to the old cheese factory by T. Jones, from the center of the village. The exercises of the day were opened by the Chaplain, Rev. G. W. Lincoln, leading in fervent prayer; which was followed by music by the bands, the reading of the Declaration of Independence by Michael Hobbs, oration by J. W. Leary on the general welfare of the country, etc., and singing by a well trained choir, children, etc. The rag-a-muffin parade was well presented and carried out besides games of various kinds. James P. McPherson and wife furnished an abundant supply of food for the visitors. The day was fine and all enjoyed themselves very much. Temperance drinks of all kinds were to be had on the grounds, and the fantastic toe was tripped until the wee small hours of the early dawn.*

Other note worthy articles in the Mt. Vernon column of the *Mt. Horeb Weekly News* were; June, 1884: Wm. Hankel's horses ran away with his son George, on Saturday. They were attached to a roller. George was thrown under and the roller passed over him, and he was injured. No other dam-



Left:

Postcard from 1914.

-Courtesy of Don Henderson.

age except the breaking down of two large gates. Since, I have learned that George was more seriously hurt than first supposed. And in the same paper: Person and Allen have started a butcher shop and intend to keep some 'fresh' meat," and: Now the limburger is beginning to roll into the Mt. Horeb depot for shipment, and the air will soon be blue with the fragrance of the railroad boys. In April, 1884, the *Blue Mounds Weekly News* reported of Mt. Vernon: *The people of the village and surroundings are happy over the order of the Postmaster General increasing our mail services from twice a week to six times a week, to take effect April 1st.* And finally, reported in the *Mt. Horeb Progress* in 1892: *Another jack-ass arrived at the ranch of Thomas Jones last week. Mt. Vernon now contains more jackasses to the square inch than any other town in the county.*

## **HORSE PLAY**

In a period of history when horses were a family's prized possession, horse theft was considered a very serious crime. Mt. Vernon was not immune to this problem. In 1887, George Bowers had his prized mare stolen, as did Nels Hustad. As years went by, more families had horses stolen, and the crime spree continued unsolved. Eventually, a former Mt. Vernon harness maker, C. J. Agrelius, was apprehended for the crimes. He would steal the horses and take them to his home in North-western Illinois. Agrelius was sent to Madison for a trial. When the thief was interrogated, he confessed to stealing many horses, including one from Robert La Follette. He also revealed his secrets for disguising the stolen horses. One trick was to slice a potato, heat it and place it on the horse's forehead, thus branding off some of the hair. This changed the steed's black head to one with white on it, making the horse less recognizable to its owner. Agrelius was found guilty and sentenced to prison in Waupon. The "*Primrose Anti Horse Thief Association*," was formed in 1891, as a result of Agrelius's crimes. After the formation of this association no horse thefts were again committed.

## **MT. VERNON'S MUSICAL PAST**

It was in the year of 1891 that the Mt. Vernon Coronet Band was formed with their

bright new uniforms and shiny brass instruments. Each member of the band was responsible for the initial sixteen dollars and fifty cents for instruments and expenses. The instruments were ordered in September, 1891, and arrived just one month later. The band instructor was a man from Mt. Horeb, J. P. Moe. He came to Mt. Vernon on Saturday nights to lead the band practices, and by July 4th, 1892, the Mt. Vernon Coronet Band was ready for their first performance.

One can imagine the merriment brought from these minstrels at the annual parades and town gatherings. In 1897, the *Mt. Horeb Times* newspaper reported:

*"This is getting to be quite a musical hamlet. The violin, base viola, coronet, drum, organ, piano and harmonica could be heard all over on Sunday." The newspaper also reported on this gathering, "The picnic given by the Mt. Vernon Coronet Band at the Big Spring west of the village on Friday, Sept. 13th, was a fine success. Although the weather was of the usual picnic order, a goodly number of the people gathered at this beautiful spot to spend the day. In the forenoon they were entertained with songs by the choir, music by the band, and one of Uncle Joe Henderson's fine poems, which are always so fitting to these occasions. And then came the dinner. This was the crowning feature of the day, and was presented by the Ladies' Aid Society, and the long table, with its bountiful supply of eatables and beautiful floral decorations, was evidence that the ladies had tried to outdo themselves."*

Music was important entertainment for the people of Mt. Vernon. In 1888, a Choral School had been set up in the Baptist Church with Ben Rogers the teacher. On Sunday mornings the Baptist Church would come alive with hymns. Nowadays, the Zwingli Church carries on the same traditions of singing praises. Today, Julie Stapelmann and Libby Sherwood teach music to the Sunday School at the church, as music teachers throughout the years have taught music appreciation to the local residents. Bernice Moore taught piano for many years, and Nona Erfurth helps students learn today. Mt. Vernon residents could always count on a spirited dance at the town dance hall on Saturday night as the rafters rang to accordion music and the floor would bounce to the polka beat. *-Photo on page 24.*



Above: *The Mt. Vernon Coronet Band, organized in 1891. Standing L. to R., Henry Mitchell, Alfred Brader, John Harker, Emil Koch, Herman Hankel, and seated L. to R., August Koch, Ray Morris, Sidney Foye, George Pierce, Oscar Lust, John Korner and Knut Boe. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



Above: *Maple tree planting in honor of the Rotary International Founder, Paul Harris, 1992. -Courtesy of Christine A. Hynek.*



Left: *The gazebo, erected in 1994, in memory of Bruce Legler, a local arm wrestler. -Courtesy of Walter Brink.*



## MT. VERNON FOREST OF FAME PARK

The village of Mt. Vernon, Wisconsin is situated the same direction and distance from the Wisconsin State Capitol as is the United States Federal Capitol from George Washington's home of Mt. Vernon, Virginia. This coincidence is how the village of Mt. Vernon acquired its name in 1852, given by George G. Britts, one of the early settlers of this area, who was from Virginia. In 1915, as John S. Donald, Secretary of State of Wisconsin, was walking along the banks of the Potomac River, in the state of 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 was to become the "Forest of Fame," made up of trees from many parts of the world, planted here to honor famous persons who dedicated their lives to the service of mankind. 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.

On Arbor Day, in 1916, a half dozen small elm and maple trees that were secured from George Washington's Potomac Estate were planted in the village square of Mt. Vernon. The school

children and residents of Mt. Vernon and surrounding towns were present at the dedication of the trees. One year later, the Lincoln elm, from Hodginsville, KY, Lincoln's birthplace, was planted and dedicated. In 1919, five spruce trees were secured from General Pershing's A.E.F. Headquarters in Chaumont, France. At the dedication ceremony a note from General Pershing was read, "Let us hope that to the school children of Wisconsin these trees will typify, by their strength and stature, the life, force and ideals of their fathers, the American soldiers who crossed the ocean and gained the victory in order that their children might be free." In 1919 the Joan of Arc willow was also planted. In the following years many more "famous" trees were planted and dedicated in the Forest of Fame. Memorial plaques were placed next to the trees, marking their origins. The memorial placed on the Bob LaFollette tree stated his last words, "I am at peace with all of the world, but there is a lot of work I still could do. I do not know how the people will feel toward me, but I shall take to the grave my love for them, which has sustained me through life." 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.

Right:

*Aerial photo taken of Mt. Vernon circa 1946. The Forest of Fame Park is the square on the right, across from the Baptist Church. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



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## THE FOREST OF FAME

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### Other trees that were planted and dedicated in the Forest of Fame were:

- 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. Farwell - elm from Madison, Wisconsin
- 1927 - Gov. Washburn - elm from Madison, Wisconsin
- 1927 - Gov. 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 - Frances 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

The Mt. Vernon Park was originally a public square named "Britts Park", set aside by the town's founders, and incorporated in 1920. The park served as the playground for children attending the Mt. Vernon Public School during the years that the school operated. Perhaps the greatest use over the years has been for baseball and softball games by both men and women. The park also serves as a home base for the local tug-of-war team, and in 1972, the tug-of-war organization built and donated the present shelter house. In the 1980's, a new well was dug and a building for flush toilets was provided for those using the park. A flag pole was erected and dusk to dawn lighting was installed. 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. Arm wrestling was becom-

ing a popular event at the park, and in 1994, a gazebo was built in honor of Bruce Legler, a local arm wrestler. Federal regulations determined that certain older playground equipment was accident prone, so new playground equipment was installed in 1995.

The Forest of Fame Park has continued to be a well used public park in Mt. Vernon. The park lies on the boundary of the townships of Primrose and Springdale, and it is used to a great extent by residents of each. Both townships contribute financially to support the park. At an annual meeting a park board and board of directors are elected. Those elected in 1995 were: Guy Austin, president; Ed Seis, vice-president; Richard Legler, treasurer; Vi Ryan, secretary; board of directors - Ben Goebler, Duane Garfoot and John Hoffman. The caretakers are Mr. and Mrs. William Ryan.

## THE BAPTIST CHURCH

The Baptist Church that once stood on Jackson Street, in the town of Mt. Vernon, was built in 1869. The land for the church was donated by Isaac and Joanna Brader, who donated their Bible as well. The bell on the church had been brought from Milwaukee. The church cost \$3,500.00 to build. In 1888, the whole building was raised, a stone foundation was built, and a furnace was installed. Also in 1888, a Choir School was started in the church. Ben Rogers was the instructor. The original congregation consisted of some sixty members, with the Reverend George Martin as their pastor. Pastor Smith was the first to preach in the new church. Several other pastors served the church. Reverends Martin, Lincoln, Higby, Elwood, Sprague, Caine, Finch, Jett, Gilick, Duff, Nickerson and Elsom all lead the congregation in later years. As John Kollath remembers, *"The church had a high ceiling, and a pump organ from which the music sounded wonderful."* By 1946, the Baptist Church had been closed, except for funeral services, and a yearly homecoming service that was held on the

Below: *The Mt. Vernon Baptist Church in 1916. The church was built in 1869, and partially burned after a lightning strike in 1954. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



first Sunday in June. In 1954, the church was struck by lightning and it partially burned. At that time there were only four members of the congregation. They were, Blanch Kollath, Blanch Moore, Arthur Moore, and Adeline Mitchell. The bell had been cracked in the fire, but it was removed from the wreckage and sold to Kenneth Belde.

## ZWINGLI UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Mt. Vernon Swiss Reformed Church and its congregation date back to 1888. In February, 1912, under the leadership of Reverend Elliker, the Zwingli Mt. Vernon congregation consisting of about 20 families, mostly Swiss farmers and cheese makers, was formed. The name, Zwingli, was the name of one of the leading Reformation preachers in Switzerland, Ulrich Zwingli. In the spring of 1912, Rev. Fred W. Hoernemann accepted a call to serve Mt. Vernon in addition to two other churches. He lived in Belleville, and an old horse, Billy, provided the transportation. His yearly salary was \$700 plus supplied living quarters.

Without a suitable place to worship in Mt. Vernon, the first services were held in the church of the Evangelical Association which was located two miles east of Mt. Vernon at the intersection of County Highway G and Messerschmidt Road. On July 13, 1913, the church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. For the next year, the Zwingli congregation used the Baptist Church on Jackson Street in Mt. Vernon, which had been organized in 1869, to hold its services in. The Baptist Church also was destroyed by fire in 1954.

On November 16, 1913, the Zwingli Swiss Reformed congregation voted to build its own church. In the spring of 1914, construction began on the land donated by August Koch. With the donated labor of church members and \$5,437.00, the church was built and completed in February, 1915. The original services were held in the German language. Reverend Hoernemann was followed by pastors Walter Grosshuesch, George Grether, Herman Lehman, Walter Clausing, Zane Pautz, George Bahner, Terry Williams, Paul Scheler, James Eckblad, Brooke Wichleff, Douglas Pierce, Barbara Rudolph (from Germany) and the present pastor, Jeff Sartain.

After several denominational mergers had taken place, it was on June 25, 1957, that the Mt.

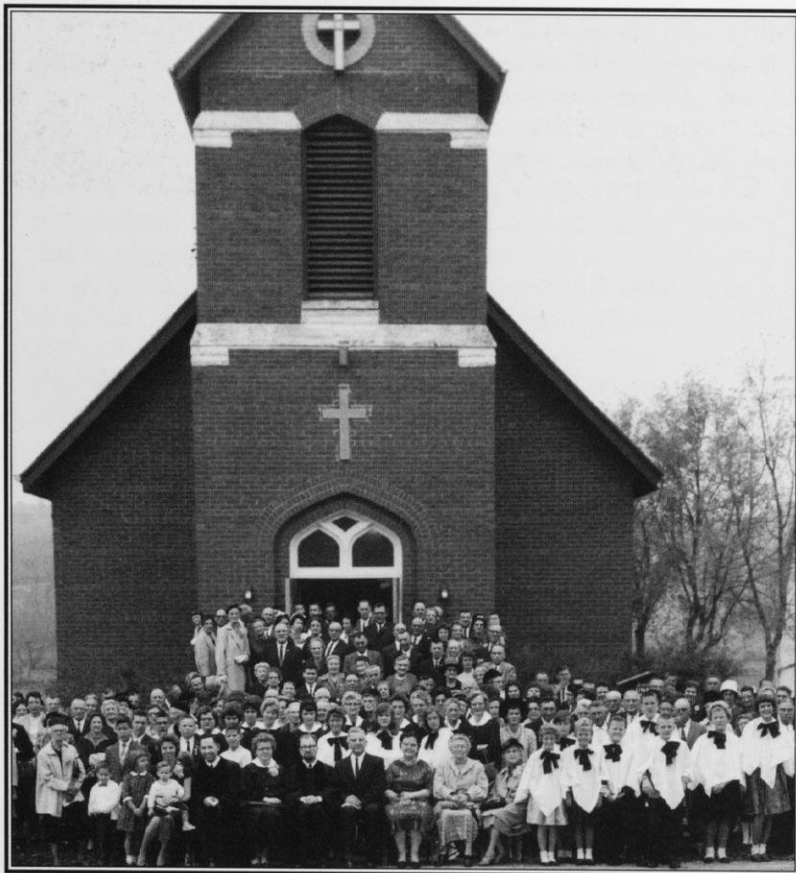


Vernon Church became known as Zwingli United Church of Christ. The church presently draws its 120 members from Mt. Vernon and the surrounding communities. For the year of 1993, the church hosted a visiting pastor from Germany, Rev. Barbara Rudolph.

On July 29, 1979, an addition was built onto the church. In 1940, because of deterioration, the original steeple had to be removed. In the summer of 1995, an entirely new roof was added to replace the old tin roof, and in September a beautiful new steeple was built and mounted onto the new roof of the church. The steeple was built by a 35-year member of the church, John Beutler. The new steeple was placed on the church September 12, 1995. Dave Nelson hoisted the steeple up with his crane, and Wayne Klosterman and Doug Dahlk placed and secured the new steeple. The steeple project was the last work of John Beutler, he died on March 27, 1996.



Above: *The new steeple was placed atop the Zwingli U.C.C. on September 12, 1995. The steeple was built by John Beutler. -Courtesy of Walter Brink.*



Above: *Members of the Zwingli U.C.C. congregation in 1965. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

## THE MT. VERNON CEMETERY

The settlement of the town of Mt. Vernon had begun in 1846, and the population had grown. In 1858, thoughts of the residents were turned toward having a resting place after death. The Mt. Vernon Cemetery Association was formed on July, 19, 1858, for the purpose of acquiring land for a community cemetery. In 1859, money was raised by subscription and land was purchased. The northern part was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Robbins for \$15.00. Mr. and Mrs. John Jones received the same amount for the southern part. The selling price of family lots ranged from \$1.00 to \$3.00 depending upon the distance from the main alley. The picturesque cemetery served as a final resting place for many early pioneers from Mt. Vernon and the surrounding area. An arch over the entrance to the cemetery was erected by a local civic group, the "Willing Workers of Mt. Vernon," and it stood for many years.

On May 15, 1958, an additional parcel of land was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Emery Kahl. Since it had been an orchard,

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## CHURCHES

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the trees had to be removed and the area was leveled in 1966.

Today, there are over 450 people buried in the Mt. Vernon Cemetery. Since 1858, prices for lots and services have increased considerably. A lot in the new section today costs \$350.00. In

years past, two men or boys would dig a grave 6 ft. deep for \$10.00. Today, a man with a machine digs one less than 6 ft. deep and receives \$185.00. The Mt. Vernon Cemetery remains a place that one can remember loved ones and reflect on the early settlement of the community.



Below: *As the new steeple was placed on the Zwingli church, these senior citizens of Mt. Vernon watched. Seated L. to R. are: Benunice Berge, Ruth Guyer, Della Way, Helen Kollath, Frieda Erfurth, Hedwig and Herbert Hankel, Ruth and Walter Brink, and Leona Bigler, with Eva Rhiner seated in front. -Courtesy of Walter Brink.*

Above: *The Mt. Vernon Baptist Ladies Aid Society at the home of Emil & Louise Koch in 1914. -Courtesy of Dorothy Schwepp.*



## MT. VERNON SCHOOLS

The first school house in Mt. Vernon was a frame building built in 1851. When the new stone school house was built in 1866, the first frame school was then used as a wood shed. In 1884, it was written in the newspaper that, "C. J. Lewis has improved the looks of our schoolhouse very much with a cupola and a nice bell is hanging inside, and if the children remain outside after school calls now, it is not because they didn't hear the bell. On Saturday evening the stage brought Miss M. P. Tierny, of Madison, who has been engaged to teach the fall term of school here." At a meeting in 1887, the need for another new school house was discussed. A motion was made to build a new school house, but the motion lost. Not until July 18, 1910, did a motion to build prevail. They voted to raise \$5000.00 as a building fund. Dr. H.A. Sharpe and S.E. Foye were appointed as the building committee to act with the school board. Ed Pierce was the clerk, and he was instructed to procure building plans. The mason work was to be done by Charles Erfurth and S.E. Foye. The Kleven Bros. were given the contract for the building. The well at the school had been drilled in 1898.

Old records reveal that the teacher's wages in 1871 were \$150.00 for the entire nine months of the school year. By 1947, the wages had increased to \$2,025.00 for the same period of time. The teachers who taught at the Mt. Vernon School are fondly remembered by all of the residents of the town who were either pupils or parents. The following is a list of school teachers who once taught at the Mt. Vernon School; Alfred E. Brader, Reier Mikkelson, Libbie O'Conner, M.P. Tierny, Johanes Grinde, Lizzie M. Groves, Mrs. Tice, Viola Moore, Mrs. Lazarace, Hazel Onstead, the Harmin sisters, G. Marty, Roxie Boller, Walter Brink, Ernest Leuthi, Mrs. Julson, Clara Wittwer Strommen, James H. Smith, Annie M. Lee, Martin C. Hobbs, H.C. Michaelson, Alice Bjelde, Pearl Thousand, Margaret Lee, Jane Berge Doyle, Florence Andrews, Laura Norslien, and Lois Bayles, and others.

In spite of the fact that the new school house had two rooms, only one room was used for grades 1 through 8. The second room was used for music, art and extra curriculum activities. The school was the local center for plays, programs, debates, Mother's Club meetings, socials and teacher's meetings. The children attending



Above: *Clara Kittleson on her graduation day circa 1907. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

this school were very fortunate. They had a huge playground across the highway in the Mt. Vernon Forest of Fame park. There was also an annual "play day" held every year in which all of the children from nearby schools got together for scheduled games and events. When the Mt. Vernon school district became consolidated into the Mt. Horeb school district in March of 1963, the Mt. Vernon School was sold for a family residence.

In the late fall of 1964, the La Follette Heights elementary school opened for its first student class. The school was situated on Highway G, south of Mt. Vernon. It was part of the Mt. Horeb School System. Elementary age children from Mt. Vernon went to school at La Follette Heights, and upon graduating from



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## SCHOOLS

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La Follette Heights they then went to the Mt. Horeb High School. The La Follette Heights School was closed in 1981, and now all ages of school children from Mt. Vernon attend classes in Mt. Horeb.

Below: *The frame school house built in 1911 to replace the old stone structure. This building is now a residence. -Courtesy of Arlene Finley.*

Below:

*A class at the frame school in Mt. Vernon in 1937. The teacher is Walter Brink. Grade 1: Virginia Moe, Marjorie Helmid, Marion Marty, Richard Rindy. Grade 2: Jackie Doris, Walter Gerber, Mary Bischoff, Leslie Lust, Dorothy Wittwer, Donald Way. Grade 3: Marvin Geisler, Velma Way, Ed Regge, Barbara Shelstad. Grade 4: Laverne Moe, Byron Berg, Ed Duerst. Grade 5: Judy Shelstad, Valera Anderson. Grade 6: Lillian Eggimann, Arlene Marty, Esther Regge. Grade 7: John Gerber, Bonnie Way, Leonard Marty, Medford Marty, Herman Duerst, Virginia Anderson. Grade 8: Blanche Berg. - Courtesy of Byron Berg.*



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SCHOOLS

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Left:

*Students of the Mt. Vernon School, circa 1907.  
-Courtesy of Joyce Everson.*

Below:

*The school children in  
Walter Brink's class of  
1938. -Courtesy of Walter  
Brink.*



Above:

*Last day of school in  
1941. -Courtesy of Jerry  
Gilden.*

Right:

*Mt. Vernon kids waiting  
for the schoolbus in  
1996.  
-Courtesy of Tim White.*



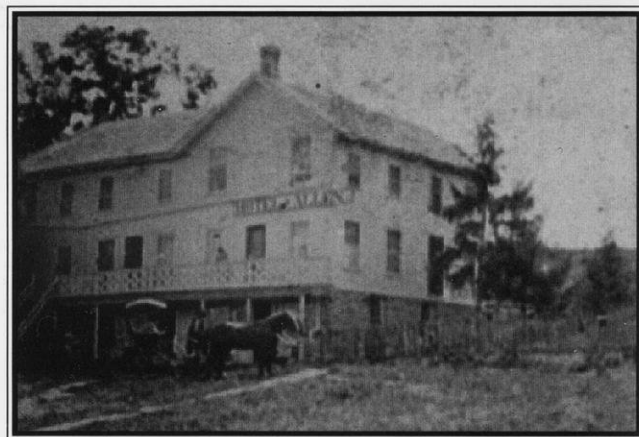
## THE HOTEL DE ALLEN

The first hotel in Mt. Vernon was built by John Jones Sr. By 1860, a hotel named the "Hotel De Allen" was built and operated by Mr. Charles C. Allen. New barns were built, a saloon, and later an addition to the hotel were added, making it a convenient and comfortable stopping place for travelers. Farmers who brought their grain by wagon to Mt. Vernon to be milled often needed a place to stay overnight before returning home. Businessmen, travelers, and new doctors in town all stayed at the Hotel De Allen. Mr. Allen died in March, 1880. His wife then took charge of the hotel.

In 1878, Mr. Charles. C. Allen witnessed and aided in the rescue of several people who ventured out in the mill pond on a dilapidated flat-bottomed boat. As the story goes, George Martin, the school teacher had gone home for lunch. Several students Carrie McCord, Ida Van Norman, Lottie Way, Charles Allen Jr., and Dell Foye decided to take a boat ride after they had finished their lunches, even though they had been told not to use the boat. Alta McCord and Alex Osborne stayed on the shore. Without a warning, the boat suddenly tipped, spilling the children. The children who were on the shore ran quickly to the Allen Hotel screaming for help. Mr. Allen was sitting on the hotel steps. He heard the screaming, ran to the water's edge and jumped into the water to aid in the rescue. Unaware that his heavy boats were going to sink him, he too had to be rescued by the children on the shore. Carrie McCord was revived by Dr. Donald. Charles Allen Jr., Dell Foye and Lottie Way rescued themselves, but two of the children drowned. Ida was 16 years old and Alex was 14 years of age.

## THE MT. VERNON MILL

The first grist mill was built by Edward Britts and Charles Smith in 1858. It had massive wooden wheels and was a formidable structure in its day. In the early 1880's, the wooden wheels were replaced with a turbine water wheel, C. W. Karn made the improvements. It was not unusual for as many as 20 farmers and their wagons to be waiting in line to have their grain ground in the mill. Farmers came from as far away as Argyle and Blanchardville to mill their products. They would haul the wheat in by horse team, stay



Above: *The Hotel De Allen, built in 1860 by Charles C. Allen. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

overnight, and leave the next morning with a wagon full of flour. Mt. Vernon had a livery stable, where the horses were taken care of, and a hotel for the farmer's to stay at. Farmers would bring their grain, and be charged a price according to how much and how coarse the milling was. In 1887, while Nick Hentgen was in possession, the mill burned to the ground. When the mill was water powered, the mill pond would occasionally have to be scraped, the object being to provide more water in the pond to drive the mill. It was done by horse teams hauling a scraper with two wheels on it. Another team, would be waiting to haul the sediments to a field.

George Orr built the grist mill as it now stands. Fred and Ferdinand Koch operated it for many years. Herbert Hankel bought the mill in 1946, from the Koch brothers, along with 19 acres just above the bridge, which gave him the water rights to build a dam for water power. Herbert Hankel recalled that when he bought the mill property in 1946, with the 19 acres, his taxes were \$98.00 per year. During his ownership of the mill, there were approximately 150 regular farm customers. It became necessary to convert the mill to electricity, because highway improvements had made it difficult to add spillways to the pond. There would not be enough water in the pond to sustain the milling operations.

In the fall of 1948, Stuessy Feed Co. of Belleville, Wisconsin, purchased the mill from Herbert Hankel. Waldo (Duke) Disch came from Belleville to be the manager. He and Earl (Poker)



Marty worked for Fred Stuessy. During the period of five years, 1948 to 1953, some improvements were made. Parts of the flour milling operation were taken out and replaced with more modern feed milling equipment for livestock feeds. The water gates that were built into the road bridges on Highway G, were taken out and replaced. The mill race was also removed to make way for the new road and the entrance road to the mill was replaced with a new service road. The water power had been used to shell corn and elevate feed.

In 1953, Waldo Disch and N. H. Thomsen purchased the mill from the Stuessy Feed Co. and continued to process livestock feed for the farmers in the area around Mt. Vernon. In 1958, Disch and his wife Betty, became the sole owners of the mill and continued to process feed, and clean outs and started one of the first custom weed spraying businesses in the area. He started with a Massey Harris tractor. He took the fenders off and mounted tanks where the fenders were, put a 30 foot boom on the front and had a self-propelled sprayer. Later, Disch went to a commercial "Hi Boy" sprayer that was a three wheeler. After wearing out three of these machines, he changed to a pick-up truck with a 500 gallon tank and a 40 foot boom. This method of spraying continued until 1978.

During their years in the feed business, Duke and Betty Disch offered grinding, mixing

and "free" pick up and delivery until they changed over to a shovel veyor and bulk feed. Then they charged a small fee for pick up and delivery. At one time the fees were 10 cents per 100 pounds for grinding and mixing feed. A charge of \$5.00 per pick up was added in the later years. Ten cents a bushel was charged for cleaning oats for seed and \$1.00 an acre plus chemicals was the fee charged for custom spraying. The average farmer in the 1950's and 1960's had about 30 milk cows, 10 sows and 10 laying hens. During this time period, Disch handled the Murphy and Master Mix lines of commercial feeds, bagged fertilizers, grass seed, seed corn, fencing and other farm supplies. Through the years, there were about ten different delivery trucks from a half ton to ten ton load range.

Some of the people that were employed over the years were: Albert Schwoerer, Charlie Schwoerer, Richard Fargo, Dennis Disch, Terry Disch, Sidney Wallen, Lloyd Robinson, and Reuben Chapman, who was the first to learn the operation of the Massy Harris custom sprayer. Other employees were: Roger Lust, Jim Bryant, Donald Brink, Wayne Eith, Rick Stamm, Don "Jingles" Meier, Wayne Syvrud, Robert Sies, Paul Rhiner, David Ross, Tom Thomsen, Randy Wittman, Terry Cleary, Larry Cox, Lyle Rundhaug, and Scott Ruessegger.

In 1967, Duke and Betty Disch, purchased the Jack Bischoff farm and started a laying hen operation. In 1970, they built a new, more modern laying operation on the farm with a building that was 40 feet wide and 336 feet long having a capacity of 20,000 laying hens. This operation along with the mill operation kept them pretty busy.

In July of 1968, there was a fire at the feed mill that started in the corn cob bin. The fire department from Mt. Horeb was called, and they called for mutual aid from Verona. They were successful in putting the fire out. "Ace" Miller was with the Verona Fire Department and he drove the pumper truck into the creek

Left:

*The Mt. Vernon Grist Mill circa 1910.  
-Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



to pump water to put out the fire.

Other improvements made at the mill were new warehouse and office space built just across Liberty Street from the feed mill in 1968. Then in 1978, the Dischs sold the feed mill and business to Ken Seston from Black Earth, Wisconsin, and he continued on in the feed business taking care of the farmers' needs in the area. Today, the feed mill is operated by Steve and Kris Sherven, under the name of "Sher-Feeds & Management Service." Steve and Kris Sherven purchased the Mt. Vernon mill in 1986, and will soon be opening a second store in Monroe. They offer a variety of services, they will pickup ear corn and grind it and clean seed. They also carry animal health aids, dairy protein, pet foods and horse feed and bird seeds. They also make deliveries.



Above: *The fleet of delivery trucks used at the mill circa 1962. -Courtesy of Waldo and Betty Disch.*

Right: *An ad for the mill from the 1909 Mt. Vernon telephone book. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

Below: *The mill today, operated by Steve and Kris Sherven. -Courtesy of Walter Brink.*



## **Mt. Vernon Roller Mills**

**F. & F. KOCH, PROP'S.**

MANUFACTURERS OF AND  
DEALERS IN

CHOICE BRANDS OF

**Flour, Graham, Corn Meal  
and Breakfast Food.**

—ALSO—

**Prussian Stock Tonic and Martin's Calf  
Feed Constantly on Hand.**

**Feed Grinding a Specialty**

WE INVITE YOUR PATRONAGE.

## **MT. VERNON TELEPHONE COMPANY**

A year after the turn of the century, on March 9, 1901, the Mt. Vernon Telephone Company was formed. William Moore and his brother, Frank Moore, had already begun to install a few phones in the area by stringing the phone wires along the fence posts between the homes. Warner Tasher, M. K. Peters, John Miller, John Donald, Adam Davidson, Frank Moore, Martin Tollefson, Charles Colby and probably others, decided that a telephone company should be started. The name, "Mt. Vernon Telephone Company", was decided upon. The original officers were, John Miller; president, Adam Davidson; vice-president, Frank Moore; secretary, and Thomas Davidson; treasurer.

The Moore and the Davidson brothers soon began extending the phone service towards Verona and Mt. Horeb. About this same time, a phone company was operating in New Glarus. Due to financial difficulties, the New Glarus Company was unable to continue operations. The Mt. Vernon Telephone Company then purchased the New Glarus Company for about \$1,500.

In the beginning, the switchboard operated out of the Koch Brothers General Merchandise Store. In 1902, a 25-line switchboard was

installed in Mt. Vernon as well as in Verona. In 1904, the Mt. Vernon switchboard was moved into the home of Frank and Mary Moore. All of Frank's daughters learned to operate the switchboard. For many years, Frank Moore served as president and manager of the telephone company. The company published a telephone book each year listing the local residence and business connections by their party lines. The rules and regulations of the use of the telephone were listed in the front of the books. The first rule was "No one shall answer any ring or LISTEN to any message not intended for his instrument. Keep your receiver hung small end up all the time when not taking or sending a message. Any infringement of this rule will be punished by a penalty." Other notices in the book read, "Please do not ring at night after 9 o'clock unless very important, and unless necessary do not ring Centrals before 7 a.m. or on Sunday p.m.," and "Children are lovely beings indeed, but they should not be permitted to play with the phone," and "The right way to talk, talk directly into the mouthpiece, and say as much as you can in as few words as possible. Speak distinctly." The toll rates per call in 1904 were, Mt. Vernon to Mt. Horeb; 15 cents, Mt. Vernon to Belleville; 20 cents, Mt. Vernon to Montrose; 10 cents, New Glarus to Mt. Horeb; 25 cents, and 10 cents for local calls.

In 1922, Ernest Gilden joined the company as a lineman, and in 1943, he was elected President and General Manager. He served with the company until 1963. In 1959, the central

exchanges in Verona and Mt. Vernon were converted to dial direct. The New Glarus exchange was converted in 1962. Stanley Hutchens became the manager in 1963, and served until 1971. In 1968, the Mt. Vernon Telephone Company was sold to Telephone and Data Systems, Inc. (TDS), a Chicago based company.

New Glarus was converted to all one-party service in 1970, and Verona and Mt. Vernon were converted in 1971. Gone forever were the days of multiple party lines in these areas. Area residents had once enjoyed getting all of the local gossip from the central operator and had developed close ties with their neighbors who shared their party line. The Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society now has in its collection the original Mt. Vernon Telephone Company central switchboard.

Right: Ernest Gilden as lineman for the phone company in 1925. -Courtesy of Jerry Gilden.

Left: Bernice Moore at the switchboard in 1959. -Courtesy of Bernice Moore.

Below: Part of the telephone directory from 1904, with long and short rings signifying the individual phones. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.



NO. 6. MT. VERNON, VERONA, (Via Alex. Miller's.)	
Mt Vernon (Central)	=====
Verona (Central)	=====
Davidson, Adam	=====
Erfurth, Emiel	=====
Klute, F	=====
Hefty, B	=====
Hodel, Ernest	=====
Miller, Alex	=====
Reaner, Casper	=====
Rue, Peter J	=====
Smith, Adolph	=====
Stewart, Thomas	=====
Steussy, J L	=====
Steussy, Fred	=====
Stugard, H	=====
Zink, George	=====
Zurbuchen, Christ	=====



## **THE MT. VERNON FIRE DEPARTMENT**

The citizens of Mt. Vernon met at the school house on March 12, 1907, for the purpose of discussing the necessity of securing fire protection for the village of Mt. Vernon. Temporary officers were elected. A committee was appointed to research the prices of fire pumps. Funds for the project were to be secured through soliciting.

At the second meeting officers were elected: C.J. Lewis, president; John Korner, vice-president; Ferdinand Koch, secretary; B.W. Chandler, treasurer and F.G. Moore, chief. A pump and hose were ordered. John Korner was to construct the hose cart. His fees were \$8.00.

The first Fire Department Labor Day celebration was observed in 1907. Lumber was purchased for a bowery. A band was recruited and the ball teams were organized. The celebration receipts amounted to \$297.00. After expenses were paid, the net profit was \$53.13.

On October 23, 1907, an agreement was made to build the fire house. A building site was suggested and ladders and a ladder truck were purchased. John Korner donated the building site, providing a cistern with a capacity of 100 barrels, be dug. It was to be no deeper than 14 feet from the top of the ground. It was to have a cover of 3 feet of dirt and be completed by September 30, 1908. Each man working was to be paid \$1.50 per day.

At the June 1, 1908 meeting, the president, C.J. Lewis reported that he had not yet insured the fire house and fixtures as requested because it had slipped his mind. On February 1, 1909 a motion was made to put a new lock on the fire house - one that doesn't freeze. On May 3, 1909 a motion was made and carried to buy a suitable bell for the fire company. The chief appointed 26 members to man the pump and engine, hose cart and the ladder truck. The posts for the bell frame cost \$3.10. The treasurer reported a balance of \$4.64 for the year 1909.

On July 4, 1910, another celebration was held. On July 1, 1912, five hundred feet of new hose was purchased and a box sociable was held to pay for the new hose. The gross proceeds from the event were \$41.05. To raise more money a dance was scheduled to be held in the town hall. On April 11, 1927, it was decided that a second-hand Chemical Engine be purchased, providing it was in good shape. It was later housed in the garage of William Arnold. He was to receive one

dollar per year for rent for storage of the Chemical Engine. By this time dances were held more often to raise money for the Mt. Vernon Fire Department.

The Fire Chief would order out men whenever he saw fit to look after the cistern and to fill it up if necessary. On January 7, 1929, a 2 1/2 gallon soda and acid fire extinguisher was purchased. At the March, 1936 meeting, a motion was made and carried that the chief be paid 50 cents per hour for his time spent in keeping the fire apparatus in good order. It was Carl Colby's wish that the fire house on his property be removed. There upon, the fire apparatus was housed in the brick chicken house of Koch's Store. A new fire extinguisher was purchased and moved to several locations around town, until finally it was to be located in one place, that being in the corner garage.

In 1957, the Mt. Vernon Fire Department was incorporated with a declaration and five articles. From 1940 until 1965 only annual meetings were held. The annual meeting on March 16, 1965 was held at the Ralph Davis home. At that meeting, a motion was made to dispose of all property and sell the fire extinguisher. All funds were to be transferred to the park. When the department was dissolved the officers were: Ralph Davis, president; Trivett Sponem, vice-president; Herbert Hankel, secretary; John Kollath, treasurer; Walter Losenegger, director 2-year; Harland Erfurth, director 1-year; Benny Goebler, fire chief; and Harland Erfurth and Leonard Marty, assistant chiefs. Records show that Ferdinand Koch was secretary from 1907 to 1927. His brother Fred Koch was secretary from 1927 until 1947, and Herbert Hankel served from 1947 until 1965.

The Mount Horeb Rural Fire Protection Association was formed after it was ruled a conflict of interest for insurance companies to own and operate fire apparatus. The Association member municipalities included the Village of Blue Mounds and the Townships of Blue Mounds, Cross Plains, Perry, Primrose, Springdale and Vermont. Unincorporated communities within the townships included Daleyville, Forward, Klevenville, Pine Bluff and Mount Vernon. The Mount Horeb Volunteer Firefighters again staffed the apparatus provided by the Rural Association.

Recognizing the duplication of apparatus and equipment and in an attempt to provide improved fire protection at a lower cost, the

Rural Association and the Village of Mount Horeb merged to form the Mount Horeb Area Fire District in May of 1979. The total area served covers 42 square miles, inhabited by 9000 residents. Two hundred and thirty-five businesses are provided fire protection by the Mount Horeb Volunteers. Current staffing levels include 45 firefighters and 30 EMS volunteers some of which are cross-trained. The Mount Horeb Volunteer Fire Department Emergency Medical Service was formed in 1976 to provide a basic life support EMS system for the area. The Department responds to approximately 600 calls per year including 450 to 500 rescue and 100 to 150 fire incidents.

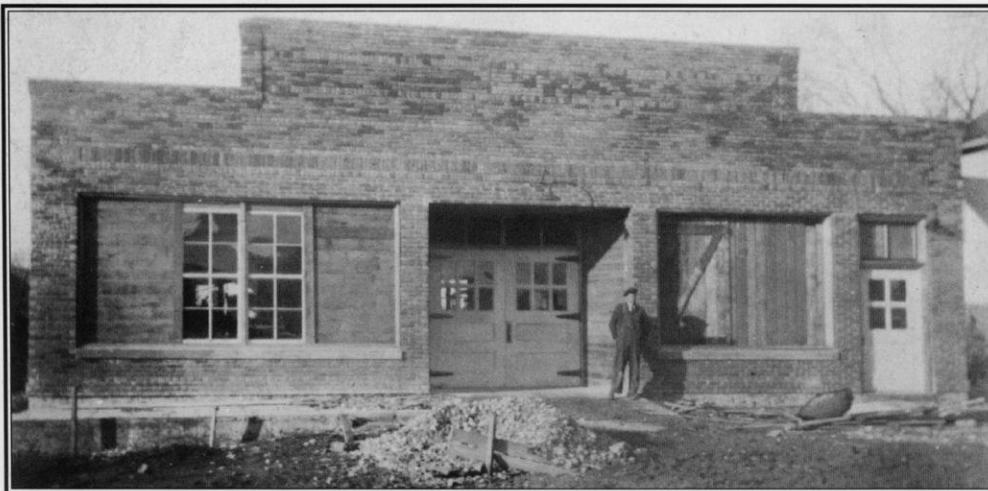
The Mount Horeb Volunteer Fire Department takes great pride in being one of the finest equipped units in the state. This equipment currently consists of three pumper-tankers, a heavy duty rescue squad, a quintuple combination ladder truck, a brush attack unit, a command car and a basic life support ambulance. In addition to providing basic life support emergency medical service and full fire protection for the Mount Horeb Area Fire District, the volunteers also manage to find time to organize and

provide four community-wide events, two of which double as department fund raisers. Folks of all ages delight in the Fourth of July Children's Parades, held both in Mount Horeb and Mount Vernon.

### **THE MT. VERNON GARAGE**

Before automobiles came to be, the blacksmiths and the carriage makers were called upon to make the needed repairs on transportation vehicles. A Mt. Vernon report in a 1884 newspaper said, "A runaway horse belonging to Wm. Arnold broke loose last Sunday at J. P. McPherson's and ran till he turned the corner by Ike Brader's, when the buggy flipped. This checked his speed somewhat and he was caught. The buggy was left at T. Eyerell's shop for repairs." In the days of horse-drawn wagons there were several blacksmith shops operating in Mt. Vernon. The blacksmith shop that was built by Issac Spaanem, and later operated by Albert Lee, then by Miner Marty, was purchased in 1956 by Harland Erfurth.

In the 1920's the Colby brothers ran an auto repair shop and sold farm machinery in Mt. Vernon, and Alfred Eggimann serviced vehicles for many years at the garage that is now the J & W Bar. Throughout the years the *corner garage* in Mt. Vernon, has never had to look far for a good repairman. The original owners of the shop were the Lee brothers, Ben, George, and Herman. In the 1930's, Rodney Kollath purchased the garage and operated it for many years. In 1937, Walter Brink rented the garage. Next came Orville Showers who owned the service station and did



Above:

*The Mt. Vernon garage circa 1934, when Rodney Kollath owned it. -Courtesy of Alma Skindrud.*

Left:

*The construction of the Mt. Vernon garage circa 1910. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



Left:  
Garage owner, Adolph Fredrickson. -Courtesy of Adolph Fredrickson.



Right:  
Gasoline and service were needed to keep Mt. Vernon vehicles running. Mabel Moore and a friend, circa 1907. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.

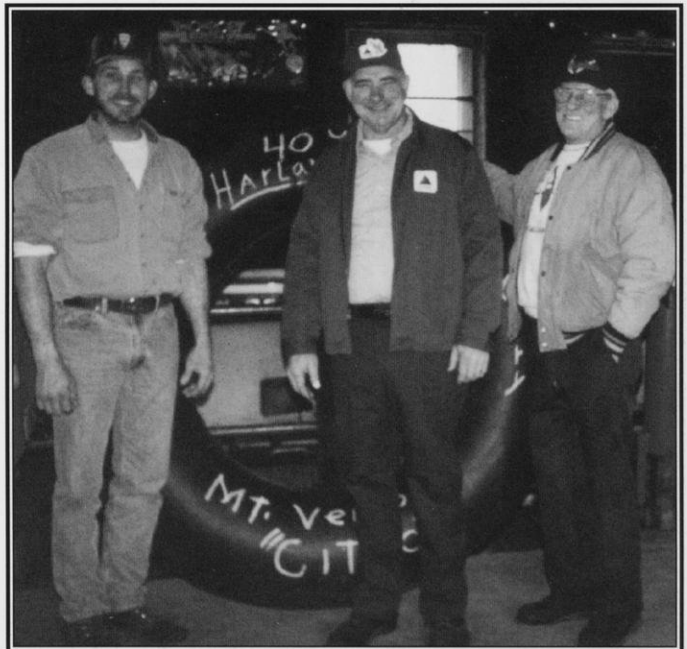
Below:  
L. to R., Gary Trainor, Harland Erfurth, and Gerald Trainor in March, 1996. -Courtesy of Ben Goebler.

his share of mechanical repairs. No problem was too large or too small that he would not undertake. Walter Brink recalled, *“One day I took my hay baler to him. The stationary knife was fastened by a counter sunk screw. He applied a screwdriver to no avail. He then used a huge pipe wrench and twisted the screwdriver. I asked, ‘What do I owe you for the screwdriver?’ His answer was, ‘No problem, Sears Roebuck guarantees all of their tools, I will get a new one.’ My knife was sharpened and I was back in business. A sign in the shop read, ‘We think as much of our tools as we do of our wives, so please do not ask to borrow either’”.*

Melvin Westby rented and operated the garage for some years after Orville Showers. In 1954, Adolph Fredrickson bought the auto repair business from Orville Showers, and rented the building from him. Adolph operated the auto repair and body shop along with a full-service gas station for the next five years. Gasoline was 24 cents per gallon. Pop was 5 cents a bottle, and the labor charges for repairs were \$3.00 per hour. Like Orville, Adolph had the “know how” for motors and car bodies. Having to fix a twisted door on the passenger side of a 1948 Chevrolet, Adolph first went to a salvage yard in Dayton, Wisconsin. There he found a door and installed it, matched the body paint and the Chevy was on the road again. Adolph Fredrickson kept Mt. Vernon residents on the move in fine tuned vehicles. The garage business was then sold by Orville Showers to Harland Erfurth. Adolph

Fredrickson now resides in Mt. Horeb.

In 1956, Harland Erfurth began operating a repair shop in the old blacksmith shop that he had bought from Miner Marty. Then in 1959, Harland purchased the corner garage from Orville Showers. For some years the gas station had been a DX brand station. In 1959 it was transferred over to Cities Service, and it still remains a Citgo dealership. In 1970, Erfurth’s brother-in-law, Gerald Trainor, became a partner in the business. Gary Trainor is a full time






employee. They handle automotive repair, front end alignment, welding and tire repair for the entire town and farming community. They also operate a bulk delivery service, once operated by Harland's father. On March, 1, 1996, Harland Erfurth celebrated his fortieth year in the business.

**GENERAL STORES**

The apartment building next to the present J & W Bar has seen many changes over the years. The Koch brothers, August and Herbert, originally built a store there, replacing one that had burnt down in 1912. The Koch's store was a general store and one could buy nearly everything there, from groceries, clothes and shoes, to farm supplies. The Koch brothers owned the store until 1943 when Ilow Peterson bought the store and stock. Peterson never ran this store but did liquidate the stock.

Andy Nelson, who had been running another general store where Sparky's Tavern now sits, bought the Koch store from Peterson. During the war years the rationing of goods hindered store-keepers from keeping satisfied customers. Andy got around the chocolate rationing by giving distributors more than one name or address when buying candy and cookies. Also during the war years, a barber would travel to Mt. Vernon one night a week to cut hair in the store. Benny Goebler worked for many years at Nelson's gener-

**ERFURTH'S  
BLACKSMITH SHOP**  
**PHONE 424 MT. VERNON**  
General Machine Work  
and Repairing



**Welding**      **GAS  
&  
ELECTRIC  
WELDING**

*Erfurth's  
-1957-*



• General Repairing •  
AUTO - TRUCK - TRACTOR  
WELDING  
PHONE 450 — MT. VERNON  
**SHOWERS' GARAGE**  
RFD 2, Verona, Wis.

*Shower's  
-1953-*

*Kollath's  
-1943-*

**Kollath's Service**  
TIRES and BATTERIES  
Service Station — Tank Wagon Deliveries  
CONOCO GAS  
—\$—  
Mt. Vernon, Wis.      Telephone 422 R 3

*Advertisements from Mt.  
Vernon telephone books.  
-Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb  
Area Historical Society, Inc.*

*Lee's  
-1927-*

**LEE BROS.**  
CHEVROLET SALES and SERVICE  
INTERNATIONAL LINE OF FARM IMPLEMENTS  
TIRES AND ACCESSORIES      AUTO REPAIR WORK  
WELDING  
Phone 435 for Good Service  
MOUNT VERNON,      WISCONSIN



Left:  
 Looking down Main St. Mt. Vernon toward Washington St., with the Koch stores on the left and the Chandler store on the right, circa 1908. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.

Below:  
 The Koch brother's store and garage in 1926. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.

al store. Benny remembers the old pulley elevator which was in the back of the store. Its purpose was to make it easier to raise and lower stocks and supplies to and from the storage area above the store. Benny remembered that during pickling season vinegar would come in 55 gallon wooden barrels. In 1944, he stocked four barrels of vinegar to keep the farm wives in brine. Ludifisk would also arrive in barrels packed in ice. Two bachelor farmers, Selmer and Norris Colby, who farmed on top of the Mill Hill, were especially fond of the pungent fish. They were always notified of the new shipments, and would race down the Mill Hill in their pick up trucks to pick out the best white fish. Benny recalled one shipment from which Selmer picked out a fifteen pounder that was chipped from the ice. Selmer said, "It looks as if it will make a good meal, and that's no lye."

Andy Nelson owned and managed Nelson's store until 1947, when he sold it to Bayard Wallace and Melvin Westby. Wallace and Westby also had a business of rain gutter installations which they ran out of the store. Their wives, Bernice Westby and Glenn Wallace, managed the store for one year and in 1948 it was sold to Sam and Betty Bieri. In 1950, Ray Davis would pur-



Below: Ad from the 1909 Mt. Vernon phone book. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.

## B. W. Chandler

↔ Dealer In ↔

General Merchandise,  
 Ready Made Clothing,  
 Boots and Shoes, Groceries, Etc.

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### FARM IMPLEMENTS.

---

Pumps and Windmills, Woven Wire  
 and Wire Gates.

*Wagons and Carriages a Specialty.*

chase the business. He added a soda fountain and made other improvements to the store. The soda fountain became a meeting place for Mt. Vernon youths. Ben Goebler who worked at the store recalled that the soda fountain was Ray's idea, he thought that kids needed a place to spend their time as well as money. Benny said that *"the store made the best malted milks in the area, with real milk, real ice-cream, and real malt!"*

Andy Nelson purchased the Mt. Vernon cheese factory on the corner of Highways 92 and G and remodeled it into a store. He operated the store until he sold it to Benny and Darlene Goebler in 1952. Benny had worked for most of the other store owners in town, and knew the ins and outs of the business. He and Darlene spent many long hours in the store as it was open from eight in the morning until nine at night. Throughout their six years of ownership Ben and Darlene made many good friends and had many satisfied customers. When asked what one could

find in the general store, Ben replied, *"Anything you needed, we had penny candy and ice cream for the kids, bread, milk, and canned goods, cleaning supplies, an over the counter pharmacy, clothes, farm goods, shoes and much more, all sold with a smile."* Benny sold the business to Amos Austin in 1958. Amos had farmed for most of his life and wanted to be on the other side of the market. He invested in a new awning as well as other improvements to the store. He rented out the top floor of the building to the Goeblers. Amos would be the last store owner in this location. In 1960 the store closed and the building would find a new use as apartments. When asked why Mt. Vernon's general stores went out, Benny replied, *"In the end we couldn't compete with Madison. Local residents drove into the city to work and shop and the general store could not compete with the big city prices. Also it was becoming difficult to get wholesale distributors to deliver to the small county stores."*



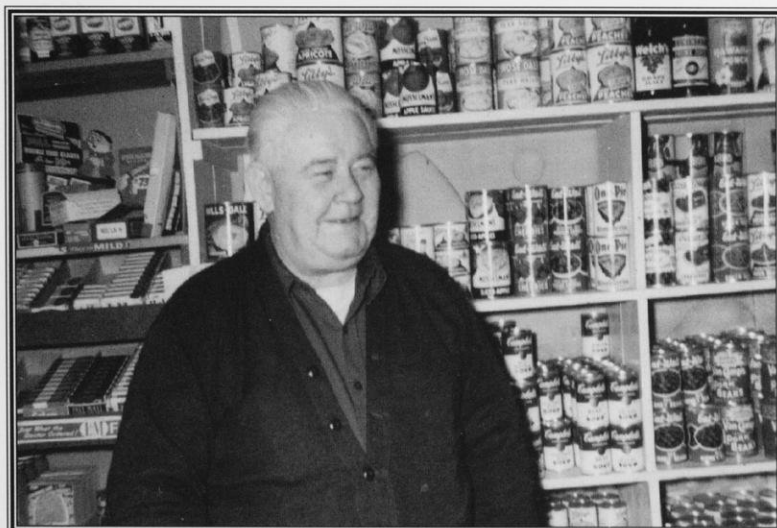
Right:

*Lucey and Andy Nelson in 1949.  
-Courtesy of Jerry Gilden.*



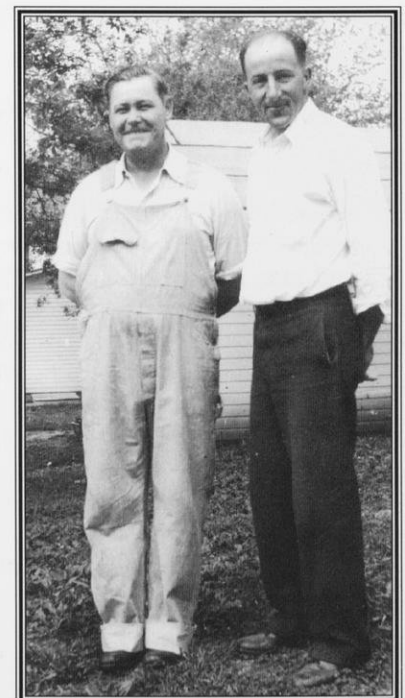
Left:

*The Nelson Store in the converted cheese factory in 1956. Located on the corner of Highways 92 and G. -Courtesy of Jerry Gilden.*



Right:

*Andy Nelson and his friend Jack Redimend. -Courtesy of Jerry Gilden.*



Left:

*Andy Nelson in 1958 at his store. - Courtesy of Jerry Gilden.*



## HISTORIC FIGURES

The following figures were taken from the 1908 record books of Mr. John Eichelkraut. John was a local Mt. Vernon dairy farmer, and these were some of his financial recordings. From April 1st, through November 30th, 1908, John delivered 83,339 pounds of milk to the local dairy and received \$826.21 for the milk. The June price was .8565 per 100 pounds of milk. The November price was 1.7862 per 100 pounds of milk. Some of the expenses that John Eichelkraut paid that year were:

100 lbs. sugar from B. W. Chandlers	\$	5.50
40 lbs. Red Top grass seed		6.00
1 milk can (Koch Bros.)		5.75
Disc, harrow & drag (Koch Bros.)		35.00
Taxes on 80 acres valued at \$2,600.00		22.28
Taxes on 80 acres valued at \$2,200.00		18.86

Here are some figures from 1996 to compare with the prices of 88 years ago. In March, 1996, the milk price average was \$13.70 per 100 pounds of milk picked up. Some of the expenses that farmers today can expect to pay are:

100 lbs. sugar	\$	30.00
1 bushel alfalfa seed (3 acres)		64.50
A 5 bottom plow		4500.00
A 15 ft. disc		4000.00
Four row corn planter		8500.00
Grain drill		4500.00
Manure spreader		6500.00
John Deere 6400 tractor		45000.00
Taxes on 80 acres valued at \$80,000.00		2200.00

## THE MT. VERNON DANCE HALL

The Mt. Vernon community members have never had to travel very far to find musical entertainment. In the 1800's there was the Coronet Band, and the Choir, and there was at one time a dance hall called Allen's Hall. Then, in the 1900's there was John Eichelkraut and his wife, Anna, and a son, Marvin, who operated a farm south of Mt. Vernon on County Trunk U. John played the bandonia and Marvin played the drums. The dance hall in Mt. Vernon was a popular weekend gathering spot, and John and Marvin provided much of the dance music. Anna accompanied them to every dance to enjoy their music and to dance. John's bandonia had been imported from Switzerland and no amplifiers were needed. Before Marvin died, he revealed that he was never allowed to handle the bandonia as long as his father was alive. Myron Floren, of the Lawrence Welk



Above: *John Eichelkraut with his bandonia, his son Marvin and his wife Anna.*

Show, once offered to buy the bandonia for seven thousand dollars, but it was not sold.

The dance hall in the 1900's was a two story building with the top floor being the dance hall, and the downstairs being a pool hall. It was once owned by Eli Koppervick, and at one time it was run by Doc Mitchell. The building had originally been the old creamery. The dance hall accomodated square dancing and polka bands and wedding dances. Some other bands who performed at the hall were, the Bill Schmid Orchestra with Ken Zahler on vocals, Gemplers Band, and the Bill & Clara Smith Band. Dinners and beer were sold downstairs on the nights of the dances and the admission to the dance was 25 cents and girls got in free. The dance hall also was used for Farmers Institute meetings and as a lecture hall by the school. Herbert Hankel recalled one school lecture in which the lecturer, Mr. Ole Merlin, suddenly fell ill and died right there. That was one lecture Herbert never forgot. The dance hall was converted to a residence and its top floor was removed in 1971. It is now the home of Donald and Francis Way.

## TAVERNS

Saloons and taverns have always been a part of Mt. Vernon. Orne Cobblewig once tended bar, and the Hotel De Allen had a saloon. Mt. Vernon, like most towns, has had its share of occasional rowdiness due to the over-indulgement of spirits. One night in the early days of Mt. Vernon a casket maker by

the name of Hobbinger after drinking too much was taken by his buddies and laid out to sleep it off inside one of his own coffins. Another story is told of a dance at the mill in 1887 after a day of cleaning out the mill chase. A brute by the name of "Big Halvor" bolstered by liquor picked a fight with some of the other men. Mr. Halvor ended the fight by throwing many of his opponents into the mill run.

Around the turn of the century the drinking emporiums of the town were temporarily shut down. The daughter of the town chairman took a dislike to the saloons in town. She let her father, Mr. Bang know that if he did not rid the town of the saloons he was not worthy of the title of father. Chairman Bang drew up a petition at the Spring election and the village was voted dry for awhile.

During the national prohibition years, 1920 to 1933, Mt. Vernon was not entirely without its drink. Local bootleggers would traffic home brew and moonshine into the community. Ruth Bolliger remembers the day prohibition was repealed. *"Beer was brought into my mothers restaurant. We had no way to cool it except to ice it down in washtubs. Our little restaurant was suddenly a tavern, and that day would prove to be one of our busiest."*

The tavern and restaurant named "Eggimann's," started by Louisa Eggimann in part of her husband's garage in 1932, was in service until 1962 when it was sold to Virgil and Millie Ketelboeter. Virgil and Millie operated



"Virgil's Valley Inn" until 1976. It was then sold to Dick Miller, Jack Kelly and Rick Duerst who ran "DJ's Tavern". DJ's changed hands in 1981, and the new owners, Wally and Juanita Anderson have operated "J & W's Bar and Grill" for the past 15 years. Wally says that *"good foods and good times are their specialties."*

The corner bar operating in Mt. Vernon today, "BJ's Tavern", operated by Bill and Jean Krough has a colorful past too. The building in it's early years housed a cheese maker, Harry Watt. It was a rooming house at one time and served as a shop for Mt. Vernon's earliest barber, Otto Hacker. In 1938, Andy Nelson bought the building and for a while ran a small store until he bought the Koch Brothers store from Ilow Peterson in 1942. Eli Kobberbig purchased the building and it has since been a tavern. Vic and Esther Torterice ran "Vic and Esthers" and Mel and Bernice Westby leased the business for 2 years from 1951 until 1952. In 1954, Leonard and Audrey Marty bought the building and ran "Marty's Bar" for the next 24 years. The tavern has since been leased by Herbert and Hilda Halverson who ran "3-H's" from 1956 to 1958, Gene and Gladys Meister who ran "Meister's Bar" from 1965 to 1968, and Frank Kanciaski who had "Franks Four Corners Bar." In 1970 the Martys sold the tavern to Lester and Alycia (Eggimann) Shutvet who operated "The Poorhouse Tavern" until 1978. Donald (Doc) and Francis Way bought the business in 1978 and operated "Doc's" until 1981 when he sold the tavern to La Verne (Sparky) Herman. Sparky still owns the building and leases it to his daughter Jean and her husband Bill Krough.



Above: *Millie & Virgil Ketelboeter who operated "Virgil's Valley Inn" from 1962 until 1976. -Courtesy of Millie Ketelboeter.*

Left: *The Eggimann Tavern in 1933. L. to R., Ruth, Alycia and Louise Eggimann. -Courtesy of Ruth Bolliger.*

## **DONALD'S ROCK WAYSIDE**

On June 27, 1954, the scenic 110 foot rock formation on highway 92 known as Donald's Rock was dedicated as a county wayside park. The natural land feature had in earlier years been referred to as Preacher's Cap, and McCord Rock. Photographs of the prominent landmark were taken by early photographers passing by in the 1870's. Then, in 1954, the site was bequeathed to the people of Wisconsin by Mrs. John S. Donald, widow of the former State Senator, and Secretary of State, John S. Donald.

Picnic tables and a stairway up to the top of the rock made the wayside a beautiful spot to relax in and enjoy a view of the surrounding countryside. Legends from the past stated that horse thieves once made the rock their hideaway, and it was said that a pool of water on the Rock known as Devil's Basin will never run dry. Despite the beauty of the site, several years after the park was opened it became necessary for the county to close up the wayside due to vandalism committed by unappreciative visitors.

## **DONALD'S VERNON VALLEY**

### **COUNTY PARK**

Just one half mile northwest of Mt. Vernon on highway 92 will be the site of a new Dane County Park. As of July 30, 1995, the one-hundred and six acres of natural woodland was donated to the Dane County Parks Commission by the Delma Woodburn family. The Reverend James Donald, Delma Woodburn's great grandfather settled in Springdale in 1855. The land donated for the park had belonged to the family since 1897. Three generations of the Donald/Woodburn Family share in the gifting of the land for park purposes and the desire to have the land preserved for the benefit of the public. Maintaining the environment has been a high priority of the family in the consideration of this gift. The town of Mt. Vernon is very fortunate to have this new "Donald's Vernon Valley County Park" in such close proximity and extends its gratitude to the Donald/Woodburn family.

## **BASEBALL**

The Mt. Vernon "Red Valley Team" was the baseball team to be on in 1906. Because of their winning season that year, they were respected by all of the other area teams. The players were, Andrew Brink, Johnny Wilson, Earl Fritz, Dr. O'Connor, George Brader, Gerhardt Stamm, Issac Spaanum, Tom Wilson and Grover Wilson.

In 1935, the Mt. Vernon baseball team acquired new uniforms, purchased by local businesses. It was the first year that the team had official uniforms. The Mt. Vernon baseball team played against other area teams, such as, Blanchardville, Forward, Riley, Verona, Montrose, Paoli, Belleville, Seyene, Mt. Horeb, and others. The 1935 Mt. Vernon team players were, Gerhardt Stamm, manager; George Fargo, Grant Felstad, Garfield Stamm, Bill Fargo, Stanley Borstad, Stanley Shutvet and Rudy Rettenmund. The umpire was Art Moore.

For the past 43 years the Mt. Vernon Park Association has sponsored a fast pitch softball tournament at the Forest of Fame Park in Mt. Vernon. The tournament begins the weekend before Labor Day each year, and then on Labor Day weekend, the championship games are played. At the 35th Annual Tournament in 1987, the Mt. Vernon team won the championship. The team members that year were, Rob Fredrick, Doug Way, Paul Rhiner, Gar Fraley, Dan Dahlk, Rick Stamm, Jerome Krantz, Den Fredrick, Scott Austin, Wally Anderson (sponsor), Bill Heberlein, Tracy Haag, Dave Rhiner, Fred Bryant, Guy Austin, Jeff Goebler, and Rick Skogen.

Right:

*Bob Schmid in his Mt. Vernon baseball uniform in 1935.*





**WOMEN'S SOFTBALL**

The Mt. Vernon Girls Softball Team was organized in 1949 and played until 1958. Managers of the team over the years were Jerry Erfurth, Joe Gerber, Norman Gerber, Pete Riphahn Jr. and Bob Tourdot.

The team played on August 23-26, 1951, in Richland Center, Wisconsin, at the State ASA Tournament. Sixteen teams participated. Mt. Vernon defeated LaCrosse Sheet Metal by a score of 12-5, and Yahara Fishermen of Madison by a score 5-4 to meet Penn Electric of Madison in the championship game. Mt. Vernon took second place honors, losing to Penn Electric 6-1. Penn



Above: *The Mt. Vernon School baseball team, circa 1910. L. to R., Art Gonstead, Alfred Colby, Martin Gonstead, Norris Colby, Harry Peterson, Erin Erickson, Leo & Otto Lindeman and Lester Chandler. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

Below: *The 1987 Mt. Vernon championship fast-pitch softball team. L. to R., front row: Rob Fredrick, Doug Way, Paul Rhiner, Gar Fraley, Dan Dahlk, Rick Stamm, Jerome Krantz, Dennis Fredrick, and Scott Austin. L. to R., back row: Walter Anderson, Bill Heberlein, Tracy Haag, Dave Rhiner, Fred Bryant, Guy Austin, Jeff Goebler and Rick Skogen. -Courtesy of Ben and Darleen Goebler.*



Electric went on to Pekin, Illinois for the sectional tournament, and to Logansport, Indiana for the ASA West-Central Regional Tournament.

Mt. Vernon won 20 games and lost 3 games in the 1951 season. They scored 301 runs to their opponents 55. They also took first place in the Verona softball league, winning all of their games. The 1951 team players were: Carol (Duerst) Emerson, LaVon (Marty) Wenger, Jean (Pfister) Wittwer, Shirley (Gerber) Maier, Darlene (Marty) Cleveland, Clara (Wittwer) Strommen, Helen (Riphahn) Gerber, Gwen (Austin) Johnson, Mary Lou Riphahn, Wanda (Marty) Kahl, Laura (Wittwer) Norslien, and Geraldine (Erfurth) Trainor as the bat girl.

Below: *The 1951 championship softball team. L. to R., back row: Carol Emerson, Jerry Erfurth, Helen Gerber  
middle row: Mary Lou Riphahn, Clara Strommen, Jean Wittwer  
front row: Lavon Wenger, Geraldine Trainor, Gwen Johnson*



## MT. VERNON TUG-O-WAR

The sport of Tug-O-War has been practiced in one form or another for more than two thousand years by many cultures around the world. In the nineteenth century it was popular in Northern Europe. It is likely that rope pulling came to the Mt. Vernon area with the earliest immigrants. The Mt. Vernon Tug-O-War Team is among the oldest competing clubs in the United States today. In the early years, competitions were held between neighboring communities. Mt. Vernon, Mt. Horeb, Riley and Klevenville all had teams. In 1933, a team from Primrose township went to the Chicago World's Fair for a tournament and won the championship. The pullers on that team were; Frank Carpenter, coach; Olaf Ankaltrud, coach; George Dransky, coach; Cornelius Sorenso, captain; Robert Carpenter, Vernon Manley, Werner Richard, Carl Kahl, Joe Lindgard, Hector Bakken, Richard Farrell, William Kruse, and Vernon Roske.

In 1972, in Fall Creek, WI, the Mt. Vernon middle weight team won its first State Championship. Two members of that team, John Onsager and Craig Rhiner, were the first Mt. Vernon pullers to pull in the World Championships, held in Ireland. That trip, in the fall of 1978, introduced a new style of pulling to this area and to the United States known as the T.W.I.F., Tug-O-War International Federation, which differed from the state and local styles.

By 1979, the Mt. Vernon team was pulling in the Blackhawk Tug-O-War League, with a new coach, Rick Skindrud, and new pullers besides the experienced hands such as, Duane Garfoot, Herman Duerst, and Wayne and Scott Austin. The first two seasons went well for the young team, finishing third in both the middle and heavyweight classes the first year, and finishing first in the

middleweight class the second year. In 1981, thirty members were practicing and pulling. The team fielded two middleweight teams, and a heavyweight team which managed to win the League Championship from the powerful Monroe team who had not lost a pull in ten years! The middleweight team brought back a second state title and another league title. The year 1982, was another exceptional year for the team, sweeping all of the league and state division titles. The new women's team, coached by Kim Jenkins, also won the state title that year. Two members of the men's team, Dave Jelle and Steve Frame, traveled to South Africa as members of the U.S. team in the World Championships.

The Mt. Vernon Tug-O-War Team continued to practice all styles of pulling, T.W.I.F. and the State style, which it excelled in. In 1988, a combined Mt. Vernon and Monroe team won a trip to an indoor tournament in Japan. Randy Hanna, Rich Legler, Dave Jelle and Jeff Palmer all pulled in Tokoyo. In 1990, Randy Hanna, Rich Legler, Dave Jelle and Guy Austin, along with four members of the Oregon team, all traveled to Slagharren, Netherlands for a tournament. During the tournament, Randy, Dave and Guy pulled with the North Fife, Scotland team to replace a few of its missing members who had been sent to the Persian Gulf War. This combined team captured fifth place in the indoor competition at the World Championship, with the best

ranking that had ever been acquired by either team alone. In 1992, the Mt. Vernon team was selected to represent the U.S. in the 720 kilogram class at the World Championships in Drogheda, Ireland. They won a respectable twelfth place. In 1994, the team traveled to Upsala, Sweden, where they received serious respect from the World's top teams by finishing in fifth place in the 720 kilo open club competition. It was a single defeat by a strong Gold awarded Dutch team, that kept Mt. Vernon out of the medallist round. It was also at Uppsala, Sweden, that Brenda Austin, from the women's team, was selected to pull with a Dutch women's club. This team won the Gold medal, and Brenda Austin became the first American, since 1904, to receive a Gold medal in Tug-O-War. In 1904, the U.S. Olympic team had won the Gold medal. Another Mt. Vernon team player, Shelly Everson, was selected to pull with another Dutch team, and this team too placed among the top teams in 1994.

Some Mt. Vernon team members have held offices in pulling organizations. Randy Hanna, Dave Tollefson and Duane Garfoot have served on the Blackhawk League, and Guy Austin, Craig Judd and Rich Legler have served State and National offices. The Mt. Vernon Tug-O-War team has contributed for many years to improvements and the maintenance of the Mt. Vernon Park. The team built the shelter in 1972, and in 1990 the team replaced the concrete floor in the shelter.

Each year the club contributes a share of the proceeds from its summer bash to the park fund for improvements and maintenance. The current team plans on continuing the legacy of the past teams. Throughout the years, pullers from the surrounding towns have practiced and pulled with the Mt. Vernon team, proud to represent Mt. Vernon around the world.

Left:

*The 1992 tug-o-war team in Drogheda, Ireland. L. to R., front row: Rich Legler, Craig Judd, Guy Austin, Randy Hanna, Dave Jelle and Shane Spring. L. to R., back row: Dave Tollefson, Gary Butts, Paul Cleary, Craig Everson and Kendell Wenger.*

*-Courtesy of Guy Austin.*





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RECREATION

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Left: *The 1983 Women's State Championship tug-o-war team. Front: Cristi Gust. L. to R., front row: Lisa Tollefson, Mary Duerst and Joan Jelle. L. to R., back row: Linda Garfoot, Sheri Yeager, Karen Zing, Mary Opplegger, Kathy Schultz, Wanda Anderson and Sandy Cox.*  
-Courtesy of Guy Austin.

Below: *The 1983 Men's Heavyweight State Championship tug-o-war team. L. to R., front row: Gary Snyder, Duane Garfoot, Rick Skindrud, Guy Austin and Randy Flanna. L. to R. back row: Wayne Austin, Spoof, Jon Arnes, Mike Duerst, Tom Meyer and Dave Ziegler.*  
-Courtesy of Guy Austin.



Below: *The 1972 tug-o-war Men's Middleweight State Championship team. L. to R. front row: Norman Legler and Duane Garfoot. L. to R., middle row: John Kelly, Craig Rhiner, Don Elmer, John Onsager and Norbert Haag. L. to R., back row: Don Magnuson, Jim Gammeter, Bob Onsager, Jim Leuzinger, Rufus Legler and Herman Duerst.*  
-Courtesy of Guy Austin.



## DEER CREEK SPORTSMEN'S LODGE

The *Mt. Vernon Deer Creek Sportsman's Club* is made up of about 100 local sporting enthusiasts. For the past 15 years the group has been together. Members who have served as presidents of the club in the past are: Jack Northrup, Roger Way, Fritz Haag, Leroy Haag, Paul Kelesvig, and presently the president is Ray Gilden. In 1994, the club members erected a log lodge building, located about one and one half miles from Mt. Vernon off of County Trunk U, and purchased the seven-acre lot that it is built on. The logs that the lodge is constructed of came from Yellowstone National Park which had been marred by fire. The building is equipped for archery practice and can also be accessed for local events such as receptions, dances, card parties, etc.

The club sponsors summer and winter archery tournaments once a month. They also sponsor a parent-child archery league. The sportsman's club also conducts hunter's safety courses and members have

constructed a handicapped accessible fishing dock on the Mt. Vernon creek. They also plant trees and work on stream improvement. Each year a Wild Game Feed fundraiser is held. On Tuesdays, a Dane County Outreach program takes place in the lodge, followed by a lunch and card party. The lodge has become a valued addition to the Mt. Vernon area.



Above:

*Deer Creek Sportmen's Lodge members erecting the log lodge in 1994.*

*-Courtesy of the Sportsmen's Club.*

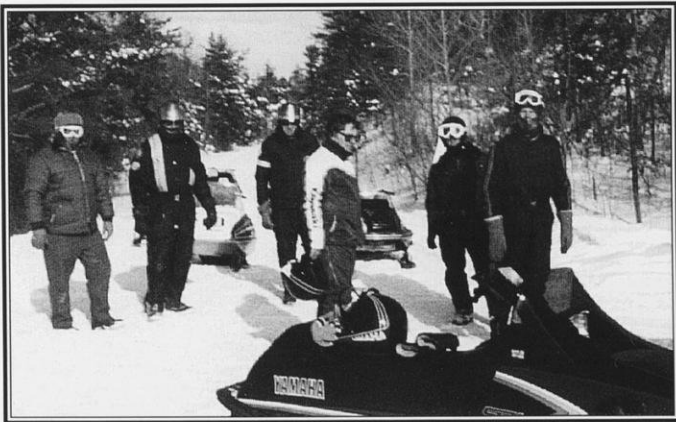
Left:

*On Tuesdays, the Dane County Outreach Program gathers senior citizens together for card games at the Sportsmen's Lodge.*

*-Courtesy of Walter Brink.*

## THE SNOWMOBILE CLUB

The "Mt. Vernon Valley Riders" snowmobile club was organized in 1970. Today, the president of the club is Jerry Lehnerr. There are between 40 and 45 members who meet regularly between the months of August and April. The club has a marked trail of about 30 miles in the Mt. Vernon area that it maintains. The Mt. Vernon Valley Riders are part of a nationwide network of snowmobile clubs. The club is an active force in the maintenance of the local Forest of Fame Park and its buildings. Annually the club sponsors a Spaghetti Feed fundraiser, hosts a Landowners Appreciation Dinner, and sponsors club snowmobile trips.



Above: *Members of the Mt. Vernon Valley Riders on an outing. -Courtesy of Jerry Lehnerr.*

## HOMEMAKER'S AND MOTHER'S CLUBS

The Mt. Vernon school mothers formed a Mother's Club in the 1920's, and it operated much the same as the P.T.A. does now. The Malone School located between Mt. Vernon and Mt. Horeb on highway 92, operated as a rural one room school until 1962. In the school year of 1925-1926 a Malone Mother's Club was organized as a social club. The Malone School Mother's Club is still convening regularly with the following members: Benunice Berge, Doris Fargo, Marlyn Grinde, Pat Hitchcock, Alice Jolly, Lola Kvamme, Lena Lewis, Shirley Martinson, Mary Powell, Marilyn Ryman, Jean Stark and Charlotte Sutter. The function of the Malone building as a school has past, but the spirit of the club continues.

In 1955, the Mt. Vernon Homemakers Club was formed. Darleen Goebler came up with the name for the club, the "Vernon Valley Sals." The club was part of the Wisconsin Extension Homemakers Council, Inc., which is now the National Association for Family and Community Education. The Vernon Valley Sals were together for 40 years, recently disbanding in 1995. Some of the homemakers were: Leona Bigler and Eleanor Erb, who were charter members, and, Hilda Losenegger, Darlene Goebler, Margaret Lust, Nona Erfurth, Lola Bischoff, Mary Slaney, Flo Ison, Vi Ryan, Adelle Olstad, Mary Way, Joanne Frederick, Sophia Johnson, Delores Bryant, Vi Zahler, Delores Stamm, Mae Kahl, Leona Syvrud, Linda Kahl, Millie Ketelboeter and Doris Daniels.



Above: *Marion (Erb) Schey and Hilda Losenegger with Mark and Christine Schey. Hilda was a member of the Vernon Valley Sals for many years. -Courtesy of Doris Daniels.*





Above: *The Mt. Vernon mothers at the school picnic on the last day of school in 1945. L. to R. front row: Mrs. Henry Moe, Alfa Shelstad, Lulla Lust, Julia Gilden, Frieda Erfurth and Geraldine Trainor. L. to R., back row: Lola Bischoff, Clara Wittwer, Marie Beard, Mary Way, Eva Rhiner, Ruth Guyer, Pauline Koch, Anna Eichelkraut, Evelyn Erfurth and Elizra Marty.*  
*-Courtesy of Jerry Gilden.*

## **EUCHRE LEAGUE**

When autumn appears and the evenings become brisk, the balls and bats are put away and the euchre games take over for five or six months. The Sugar River Valley Euchre League was formed some 66 years ago with four teams from the area. The league has expanded to as many as fourteen teams, and currently operates with a twelve team maximum. The Mt. Vernon home to the euchre league is the J & W Bar.

Alton Lust was the president of the Sugar River Valley league for 40 years until he died in 1996. A tree will be planted in the park in his honor. Perhaps the greatest supportive force behind the euchre league is Benny Goebler, who has been the recording secretary for 40 plus years. Benny records the standings of each team and keeps track of all of the humor that generally accompanies the games. The championship trophy has gone to the Mt. Vernon teams numerous times. Other teams in the league are from New Glarus, Belleville, Basco, Paoli, Mt. Horeb, Verona, Pine Bluff, Speedway, Riley, Sauk City, Blue Mounds, Barneveld and Madison.



Above: *Benny Goebler, the recording secretary for the Sugar River Valley Euchre League for 40+ years.*  
*-Courtesy of Walter Brink.*



Above: *The 1989 Sugar River Valley Euchre League team. L. to R., front row: Jerry Judd, Wally Gerber, and Ben Goebler. L. to R, back row: Stan Bennett, Bob Pfund, Walter Anderson, Dwight Spring, Len Marty, Sam Severson, Wayne Austin and Alster Jelle.*  
*-Courtesy of Ben Goebler.*

**DATES TO REMEMBER IN MT. VERNON HISTORY**

- 1846 - The first pioneer family, Mr. & Mrs. George Patchin, built a cabin near the big spring in Mt. Vernon.
- 1847 - Joel Britts aquired 200 acres of land including the site of Mt. Vernon.
- 1849 - The first sawmill was erected by George Britts.
- 1851 - George Britts platted the village and built a house in Mt. Vernon.
- 1851 - The frame school house was built.
- 1852 - The land was surveyed and recorded by J. T. Berger.
- 1858 - The original grist mill was built by Edward Britts and Charles Smith.
- 1859 - Land was purchased for the Mt. Vernon Cemetery.
- 1866 - The stone school house was built.
- 1869 - The Baptist Church was built and dedicated.
- 1878 - The accidental drowning of Ida Van Norman, age 16, and Alec Osborne, age 14, in the Mill Pond.
- 1878 - A powerful tornado struck in Primrose Township.
- 1880 - Bob La Follette spoke to the townspeople on July 5th, at the Independence Day celebration.
- 1882 - A court trial was held to determine the exact location of the main road through Mt. Vernon.
- 1884 - The Ringling Brothers Circus was in town on May 23rd.
- 1884 - Imported purebred cattle first arrived.
- 1887 - The grist mill was destroyed by fire, and shortly thereafter, rebuilt.
- 1888 - Choral school started in the Baptist Church.
- 1888 - Murder was committed by John Kuehni in the Holland Cheese factory, William Christen was killed.
- 1888 - The Baptist Church building was raised and a furnace was installed.
- 1890 - A flagpole was erected at the school for \$1.50.
- 1891 - The Mt. Vernon Coronet band was organized.
- 1891 - The "Mt. Vernon Enterprise" newspaper was published by Tom Everill.
- 1901 - The Mt. Vernon Telephone Company was formed.
- 1906 - The Mt. Vernon Red Valley baseball team had its famous winning season.
- 1908 - The Mt. Vernon Fire House was built.
- 1908 - Frank and Mary Moore owned the first automobile in town.
- 1910 - The two room grade school was built.
- 1910 - The first sidewalks were laid.
- 1912 - The Koch store and machine shop were destroyed by fire.
- 1914 - The Mt. Vernon road was paved.
- 1914 - The Zwingli Swiss Reformed Church was built.
- 1915 - The Mill Dam bridge fell down.
- 1916 - John S. Donald formed the "Forest of Fame" Park.
- 1918 - Sidewalks were laid near the school.
- 1918 - The stone quarry was dug.
- 1920 - The Forest of Fame Park Board was organized.
- 1921 - The school changed from graded to rural status.
- 1927 - Governor La Follette presided at a tree planting in the "Forest of Fame."
- 1933 - The Primrose Tug-O-War team won the championship at the Chicago World's Fair.
- 1936 - High voltage power lines were erected in Mt. Vernon.
- 1946 - Mt. Vernon celebrated its Centennial Celebration.
- 1949 - The Mill pond was drained as it was no longer needed for water power.
- 1954 - The Baptist Church was struck by lightning and partially burned.

**DATES TO REMEMBER IN MT. VERNON HISTORY**

- 1957 - The Mt. Vernon Fire Department was unincorporated.  
1963 - Mt. Vernon School was integrated into the Mt. Horeb School District.  
1964 - La Follette Heights School opened.  
1968 - The Mt. Vernon Telephone Company was sold to Telephone Data Systems, Inc.  
1968 - Harland Erfurth owned the first snowmobile in town.  
1971 - Mt. Vernon celebrated its 125th anniversary.  
1971 - The top story of the dance hall was removed and the building was remodeled for a home.  
1976 - Ice storm damage on March 4th reaped havoc on the power lines.  
1976 - Mt. Vernon celebrates on July 4th to mark the 200th year of the founding of this country.  
1979 - The "Batmobile" arrives in Mt. Vernon.  
1982 - The Mt. Vernon Tug-O-War team wins all of the league and state division titles.  
1986 - Another ice storm blanketed the Mt. Vernon area.  
1986 - Harland Erfurth celebrated 30 years in business at the garage.  
1988 - A severe drought damaged area crops, the longest period without rain since 1869.  
1988 - A local child, Doris Reeson was killed on the road while riding her bicycle.  
1989 - A tree was planted in the Forest of Fame and dedicated to the Zwingli UCC.  
1992 - Barbara Rudolph, from Germany, assumed the pulpit in the Zwingli UCC for one year.  
1992 - The Mt. Vernon Tug-O-War team is selected to represent the U.S. at the World Championships in Drogheda, Ireland.  
1994 - The Sportsmen's Lodge was built.  
1994 - Brenda Austin received a Gold Medal in Tug-O-War in Uppsala, Sweden.  
1995 - A new steeple was placed on the Zwingli United Church of Christ.  
1996 - Harland Erfurth celebrated 40 years in business at the garage.  
1996 - Mt. Vernon celebrates its 150th sesquicentennial on the weekend of October 4, 5, and 6th.



Left:

*The William and Pauline Koch 50th wedding anniversary celebration in 1915. Their home is now the residence of the Stapelmann family.  
-Courtesy of Bernice Moore.*



## ECHOES OF 1946 AND 1971

Mount Vernon observed its Centennial on the weekend of July 13 and 14 in 1946. The celebration committee members were Herman Erfurth, Mrs. James Woodburn, Mrs. C. A. Sorenson and Bernice Beard. Mrs. Robert L. Pope wrote a special 48-page centennial souvenir booklet, *"Stories of Mt. Vernon, Home of the Forest of Fame."* The Baptist Church was open for people to meet in and there was a display of historic artifacts in the church. A family picnic dinner was enjoyed by all. The Saturday evening program featured music, singing, speakers and community talent. On Sunday, the "Forward" baseball team played a game at 10:00 AM, and then at 1:30 PM a special Centennial Program paid tribute to all of the pioneers of the town. The New Glarus Yodelers performed afterward. Two thousand-five hundred persons attended the festivities.

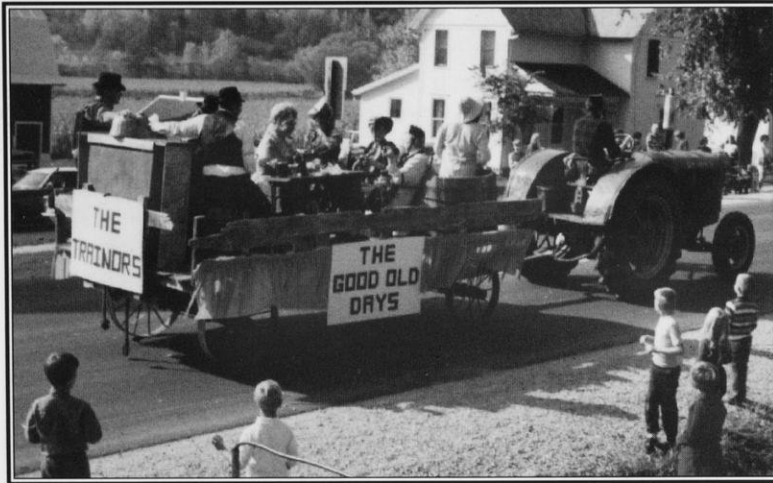
Twenty-five years later, in 1971, the loyal residents of Mt. Vernon once again put together a celebration to mark the 125th year of their town. The celebration took place on the weekend of October 15, 16, and 17. Friday night the "Verona Squares" square dancers put on a show. Then the tug-o-war team had a match. At 6:30 there was a

kiddie parade followed by fireworks and Irv Hale's Polka Band. Saturday's events began with a morning horse-shoe pitch, followed by the "Big" parade at 1:30 PM. A chicken BBQ came next, followed by another performance by the "Verona Squares." Johnny Johnson's Country Western Polka and the Kenny Platz Polka Bands had the town dancing until midnight. On Sunday morning there was a joint worship service held by the Catholic and U.C.C. worshippers. Communion was served by Reverend George Bahner and Reverend Lawrence Trainor. The Zwingli U.C.C. sanctuary could not accommodate all of the people who attended and additional chairs had to be placed out on the lawn. A ham dinner was served by the church ladies. The tug-o-war men's and women's teams held another match in the afternoon, and a BBQ dinner was followed by performances by The Alpine Brass and by Boyd Skuldtt and the Country Sisters. For the entire weekend, the crowds enjoyed historic displays, games, rides, beer and refreshments.

*Below: During the 1946 Centennial celebration this play was performed by local talent at the park. The play was titled, "The Old School where Colonel Kelly Taught." -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



A BEAUTIFUL DAY FOR A PARADE IN 1971

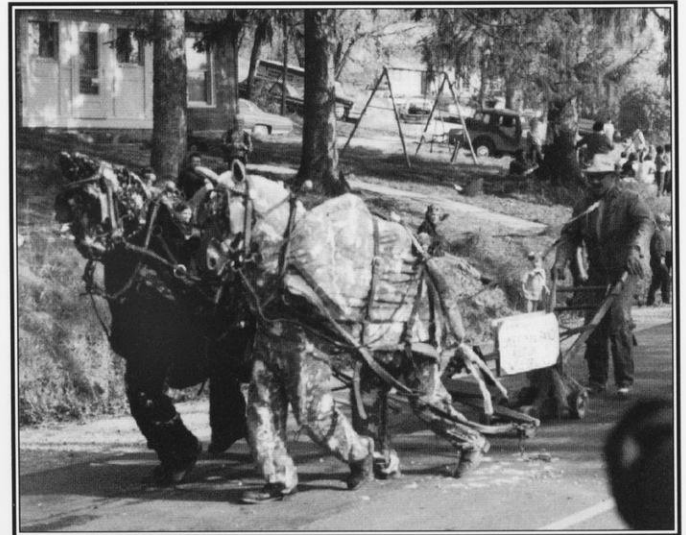


Left: *The Trainor family float, "The Good Old Days," in the 1971 Mt. Vernon 125th Anniversary Celebration Parade.*  
-Courtesy of Doris Erb Daniels.

Below: *Two fine steeds before the cart?*  
-Courtesy of Doris Erb Daniels.



Above: *"Chips Off the Old Blocks". The LaFollette Heights school float.*  
-Courtesy of Doris Erb Daniels.



Right: *"The fastest ladder truck in the west." The float entered by "Marty's Bar."*  
-Courtesy of Doris Erb Daniels.



**THE 1929 TORNADO**

By Ernest Baumgartner

Ernest Baumgartner, who now lives in Verona, has many memories of earlier times in Mt. Vernon. He recalled that after the Colby-Eggiman garage burnt down in 1925, he hauled some of the blackened bricks to his father's farm. They cleaned them and used the bricks to build a milk house that still stands on the farm.

Ernest also remembers the deplorable shape of the roads around Mt. Vernon in earlier days. The road in front of the school would be "*solid mud*," and often knee deep. Vehicles would get stuck and the cars would have to rely on their four legged predecessor, the horse, to pull them out. One such incident happened near the Mill Hill when one of the La Follette family was mired in the mud. Ernest and his horse managed to pull the car to solid ground. The driver gave him a dollar for his effort, a fair amount of money at that time.

Ernest hauled milk to the Mt. Vernon cheese factory, which at the time was a cooperative. The holding tank in front of the factory had to be pumped occasionally, and the Colby brothers would pump the sediments into their six-hundred gallon water wagon to be spread on the fields. The water wagon was also used to power a steam operated threshing machine.

At one time, large turtles and fish were abundant in the mill pond. One year, some trucks from Chicago came and caught enough mud turtles to fill up 20-fifty gallon barrels with turtle meat.

The most exciting episode recalled by Ernest happened in 1929. Ernest was threshing at the Amil Colby farm, when the crew saw a funnel cloud in the distance. As the tornado came toward them, they could see the whirling cloud picking up trees across the marsh, but fortunately, the storm changed direction before it reached the men. The tornado caused extensive damage at the Leonard Marty farm, as well as John Harker's, and the Stamm's. The tornado picked up a pump and casing out of a well, also threw a heavy horse drawn disc some 400 rods, and took entire fence lines, posts and all, and rolled them into large balls of wire and wood. Ernest said that he actually found pieces of straw that went through tree trunks. That was some storm!

**DOWN MEMORY LANE**

By Ben Goebler

It all started in the year of 1937 in the Town of Primrose. This was the year after we had experienced a very severe winter in 1936. I was a student at the Plainview one-room school house which housed grades one through eight. The teacher at that time was Mrs. Margaret (George) Lee. She was a very disciplinary and thorough educator.

It was a beautiful spring day that two other boys and I decided to skip school after the last recess until school was let out. It was the time of year when spring flood waters were overflowing their banks on the creek. The three of us invented a sport we called pole vaulting over the creek. As any young boys, we couldn't see the possible danger in this sport, like drowning perhaps. However, little did we know, there was even more danger ahead for the three of us that day. Well, when it was time to go home, we walked slowly up the hill to the school house to get our dinner pails. Who was there to meet us but our teacher, Mrs. Lee. She promptly told us to get in the school house and to sit down at our desks. She, in her stern way, lectured us about our behavior and the fact that we had skipped school. When she was finished, she went back to the storage room where wooden "*boards*", among other things, were kept that were used to fuel the wood stove that heated the school room. It was slightly dark in the school room because of the lack of electricity and it became even darker when she came back with a board in her hand. One by one we were asked to stand up by our desk and lean over. It was then that we found out just what an oak board can do to prevent a child from skipping school! "*A lesson*" learned and never forgotten by Don Hamilton, Tim Schnieder and Ben Goebler. The three of us were reluctant to tell our parents, of course, because in those days, school was for learning and not for "*hankie pankie*."

And now for the rest of the story. As a young boy of 11 years, I never dreamed of what the future had in store for me. My family and I lived through some difficult years and then moved to Mt. Vernon into our new home which had electric lights. My two friends, Don and Tim, and I all finished our education in separate schools, and I later served in World War II. I came back home to work in the Nelson store which I had also worked in while finishing high school. The owners, Andy and Lucy Nelson, had purchased the store from



the Koch Brothers. I also worked for the next three owners of the store, Wallace & Westby, Sam Bieri and Ray Davis. I then bought the store from Ray Davis in 1952 and named it Benny's General Store. My wife, Darleen, and I operated it until 1959 and then sold the store to Amos Austin.

It was then, that grade school incident popped up again to haunt me. It happened that my old teacher, Margaret Lee, lived in Mt. Vernon and was a customer of our store. One quiet afternoon, Mrs. Lee and I started a conversation about that incident. She remembered it, and earnestly tried to apologize for what she had done. But I explained that I felt that it was us three kids who had been in the wrong that day, for skipping school.

Many years later, at a V.F.W. meeting, I mentioned to my old friend Don Hamilton that Mrs. Lee's children were having a 90th birthday celebration for her in Deforest, Wisconsin. They had invited her friends and family to join them. So Don Hamilton and his wife, Bernice, and my wife, Darleen, and I went to Deforest to wish Mrs. Lee a happy 90th birthday in the year of 1994. It was one of the happiest moments of her life when Don and I hugged her. Our old friend Tim didn't make it because he had passed away. However, there was one thing we did not mention while we were there... she never caught us when we tried smoking corn silk under the bridge.



Pen and pencil drawing by Esther Eggimann, 1937. From her Mt. Vernon 8th grade autograph book that she embellished with many artistic caricatures. -Courtesy of Esther Geiger.

## RAIN WATER

By Walter Brink

Softwater, a gift from heaven is free for the asking, but to use it, it has to be collected and stored for use. When Mt. Vernon came into being, the rain barrel at the corner of the house served that purpose. As the years passed other means were devised. Cisterns, which held the collected water, were built in basements or underground to prevent freezing. My grandparents had one in their basement. When I was a child, I enjoyed pumping the soft rain water to an attic tank. From there, gravity furnished soft water any where in the house. In 1929, my parents had such a cistern beside the house and it was filled with softwater from the roof. A hand pump in the wash room was primed and softwater came forth. With the coming of electricity, pressure pumps brought hard ground water into the house. But the groundwater was not soft. Here is where Zwald's Water Softening Service from Mt. Horeb came to the rescue of homeowners in Mt. Vernon. Nowadays, it doesn't have to rain to have soft water.

## THE SPLIT LOG DRAG

By Delma Donald Woodburn

Delma Donald Woodburn, at the age of 96, has a lot of memories of Mt. Vernon. She recalls having a lot of fun in the Mt. Vernon area, especially in the winters. Delma liked to be outside, and remembers climbing all four sides of Donald Rock. Fourth of July celebrations and school play days were most enjoyable times. The Marty boys, John and Miner, made her a pair of stilts and she became proficient at walking with them. Delma remembers a humorous incident when her parents gave her some money to buy some shoes at the general store. The only shoes that fit her were high heel shoes. She bought them, but her parents made her return them for a more *sensible* style.

Delma says that one winter the snow on the side of the highway was ten feet high. Snow and kids always make for some good times. The Marty boys made Delma a pair of skis. They soaked two boards in hot water and turned up the ends. The hill behind the school house was a favorite run. Sometimes Delma would get to ride on the runners of her father's cutter.

Back before the days of pavement and black-top, the care of the rural roads were left up to

individuals to maintain. During spring thaw or rainy weather the roads would become very rough on account of the deep wagon ruts. Winter weather added to the difficulties. One tool that improved the roads was the *split log drag*. The logs would be split and built into a wide frame and the horses hitched to it. The horses would go up one side of the road and down the other to slat the water off and to level the road bed. This would also provide a gradual slant in the road to help with drainage. Later, in the early 1900's, limestone was crushed and smoothed over the roadbed to stabilize the roads.



Left:  
*Margie Webber, left, with Delma Woodburn, circa 1902. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

Below: *John Sweet Donald operating the split log drag near his farm, circa 1907. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



## CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF THE ZWINGLI CHURCH

*By Brian Bigler*

Growing up two miles north of Mount Vernon, in Springdale Township, during the late 1950s and 1960s, I was in three communities' histories: Springdale, Mount Horeb and Mount Vernon. My family's Mount Vernon connection was the Zwingli United Church of Christ and its community of faithful worshipers. My parents, John and Leona Bigler, who moved into the Martin and Anna Bang farm after they were married in February 1945, officially joined the church April 14, 1946. My sister, Bonnie, and I were both baptized and confirmed in the church.

A child's memory of social history can be very different from an adult's. My parents always chose to sit in a back pew, usually the second one on the right. From this vantage a fidgeting child could observe everyone in attendance. I especially remember the Tasher sisters, who, like everyone else, were very friendly. But from childhood I remember most the "neat" hats they wore, the

reflections from their hat pins dancing on the ceiling, and the melodious sound of their names in unison, Eva, Iva and Emma. We thought they were triplets, though actually only two were twins. Then there was Mrs. Stamm and her stylish fur collar with "real" animals' heads! The men all wore suits and ties. We children despised the Sunday morning ritual of donning formal clothing, but that's the way it was done in those days.

Reverend Pautz seemed "very official" in his long, black robe as he preached from the wooden pulpit in the center front. The tall chairs behind him looked like kings' thrones to a child, making his position even more authoritative. Reverend Pautz's wife was also my teacher at Ridgeview School, so not only did I have to behave on Sundays, but weekdays as well.

Sunday school consisted of Bernice Moore at the big upright piano, leading us children in such songs as "Jesus Loves Me." A special song would be sung for all those celebrating birthdays during the week, and a bank in the shape of cake with real candles set into the top would be passed to receive our pennies.

After singing, we would file into the basement for our Sunday School lessons. Each grade went to different areas, which were separated by dark green drapes suspended from rods. We sat on wooden chairs and benches while our teacher recited Biblical stories. We later colored scenes relating to the lesson, such as Noah's Ark or the burning bush.

After church, we would visit Walter and Hilda Losenegger, Zwingli Church members and long-time friends of my parents, who lived in the big house just across the street. Their kitchen was warm and inviting, and there was always fresh baked cookies. Hilda was a devoted helper at our family's gatherings, so devoted that she seemed like family. To distinguish her from my aunt of the same name, my mother would refer to my relative as "our Hilda."

Now when I visit Zwingli's Sunday morning services, I notice how much remains from those years. Although some things have changed, my parents still faithfully attend and still reside in the same pew. Familiar songs are sung by the same warm-hearted people who were there when I was young, but they are now joined by a new generation whose own children are storing new memories.

## OPOSSUM ON THE BLOCK

By Ann Strain

The following stories are some that I can recall of my family living in Mt. Vernon. The Strain boys, Danny, Gregg and Jack, were always getting into some kind of mischief.

When my son, Jack, was about four years old, we had a scare. There was a pile of leaves in our backyard and little Jack set them on fire. When I noticed the backyard burning, I also could see that the flames were heading towards the Moore's house. I was afraid their house would catch on fire. I rushed out and started pumping water, carrying two pails at a time and tried to put it out. I was so upset that I was crying. I couldn't put it out fast enough. Quickly, the men in the neighborhood came with shovels and dug a ditch so that the fire couldn't cross over to the Moore's house. The fire department came too, but the local men had it under control by the time they got there. Our son, Jack, had seen his father burn leaves so he thought he could do it too. I don't know where he got the matches. It is wonderful how a small community works together when someone needs help. I was so thankful for everyone who helped.

Here's another story about our son, Jack, again when he was four years old. One day, Jack and his brothers Danny, Gregg, and their friend Gary, were walking behind the Moore's house. The older boys wanted some apples off of Moore's apple trees. Gary told Jack to throw a stone at the tree to knock down some apples. Instead of hitting the tree, the stone hit a passing car and broke the windshield. The woman who owned the car went over to the school and blamed Gregg for the incident. She thought Gregg was the one who had tossed the stone. It actually had been Jack who was responsible, even though he hadn't meant to hit the car. That little guy always seemed to be getting into trouble.

Ole Way used to play war games with the boys around town. He would take them down to the stream and have them go through mud, and one time he told them to jump in the water. Gregg was quite young and didn't know how to swim yet. He jumped in and went under the water several times so Ole had to pull him out. One day I was coming out of the church after a Guild meeting, and Reverend Pautz was there. At that moment, along came my boys, Gregg and Danny, completely covered with mud. It was a most embarrassing moment for their mother.



Years ago, at Della Way's house, the young kids in town used to gather upstairs and play records. My son, Danny, played a record over and over and over and one of Della's sons told him if he played it again, he would break it over his head. Danny played it, and he did break it over his head.

I can also remember that Benny Goebler's store was sort of a hangout for the boys in town. My son, Mike, was over there a lot. Benny would tell the boys about his Navy experiences. He also had a soda fountain which was popular. The kids in town also used to like to go out to Donald's rock and climb it. One time Gregg was there, and he thought he saw a rabbit go into a hole. He put his hand in and got bit. It turned out to be an opossum. They had to catch the opossum and kill it. Then they took it to Benny Goebler's store and laid it on his chopping block, asking him to cut off the head so that it could be sent in to be tested for rabies. Benny said, "*I just scrubbed that block!*" Thank God the opossum was not rabid, or Gregg would have had to be given a lot of shots.

One time, Gregg and Danny were playing football, and the football went into the street. Jack Bishop came along in his car and ran over it by accident. The boys felt bad about losing their football, but then, when Christmas came, Jack gave them a new football. They were happy about that.

## LOOKING OUT THE KITCHEN WINDOW

*By Julie Stapelmann*

We moved into the former "Lossenegger" home in July, 1977. My husband, Gordon, and I had one baby boy at that time. We immediately began to remodel the home, which included a partial new basement and removal of a large porch in the front. The porch was replaced with a flower garden and a surrounding stone wall. This has brought us much enjoyment. The church is centered beautifully in our kitchen window, and has long been inspirational as we go through life's trials over the years. We have raised three boys and the church has been the anchor in our lives. I have received much gratification from teaching music in Sunday School and being the pianist and organist for our church for nearly twenty years. We recently remodeled our barn into a workshop which gets much use. We especially enjoy gardening and depend on the produce in the fresh, frozen, canned and dried forms. We make our own sauerkraut, horseradish, sausage,

and jellies, and enjoy fresh watercress.

George and Margaret Lee were our close neighbors for many years. George had his 80th birthday on the same day as our oldest son, Adam, had his first birthday, so we celebrated that special event each year. We had a dog that loved to steal Margaret's slippers off their porch. George was always mowing yard it seemed. The first time we saw him laid flat by the push mower, we thought he had died! We ran up to him, he opened up one eye and said, "*I'm just resting— I get tired.*"

One night I drove into our driveway with our three boys. We had just gotten out of the car when the car started rolling backward. I tried to get in to stop it, but couldn't. It rolled faster and faster across the street and down Gerald Trainor's driveway, through their garage sale tables and into their barn! Gerald immediately got into the car and saw that it was in park, but had jumped out of gear. Luckily no one was hurt. Unfortunately the garage sale items were not very salable.

## CHILDHOOD GAMES

*By Susan Strain Bovre*

I was 11 years old when we moved to Mt. Vernon in 1954. I have some fond memories of the one-room school that I attended. Mrs. Laura Norslien was my teacher and what a good person she was. She not only taught the three R's to grades 1-8, she also taught us much more. She taught the older girls to crochet, and we made some lovely doilies. She was a great outdoors person and loved playing softball. We had some wonderful ball games, sometimes the recess was extended if it was a close game. We all loved that! I remember the park across the road from the school where we all went for recess. In the fall we played in the leaves, making huge piles to jump in or use as leaf houses. In the winter we made big circles in the snow and played *duck, duck goose*, or made snow angels. Other games we played were *red rover* and *starlight, starbright, hope to see a ghost tonight*. All of us kids played outdoors from morning to night. We did not have a television yet, so we came up with our own entertainment. No one locked their doors or worried about crime. Kids were free to go fishing or swimming in the creek in warm months. In the winter, it was sledding and ice skating parties.

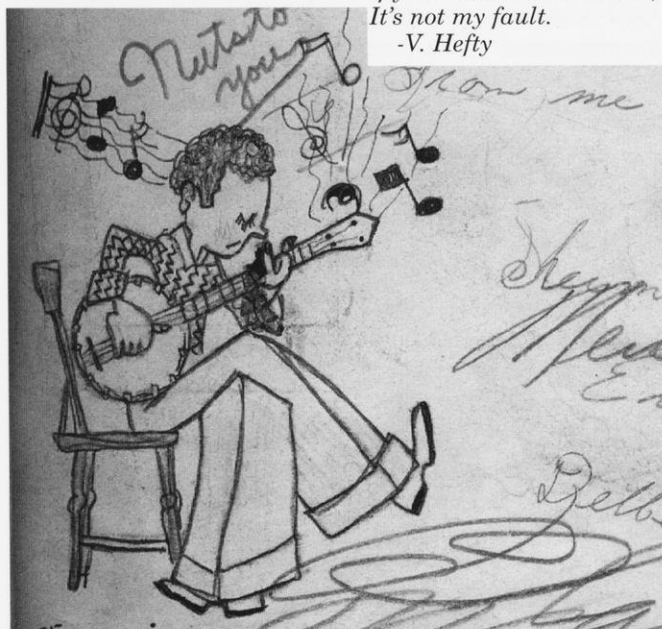
When we lived in Mt. Vernon, it had two grocery stores, two bars, one church, a gas station, a

feed mill and a telephone company with one operator who connected each call by hand. The phone was a great source of entertainment. It was a black crank phone on the wall. Everyone with a phone had a code that was their signal, like two long rings and one short one. You soon learned everyone's code so that you could answer yours or listen in on someone else's. This was called *rubber necking*.

I remember Fridays were the delivery day for Benny and Darleen Goebler's grocery store, and a lot of us kids would help Benny put away all the stock he received that week. It was fun, and we looked forward to it. When the work was done, Benny made us malts or sundaes from his soda fountain.

My favorite memory from Mt. Vernon was the day of November 3, 1961. That was the day when Marcus Bovre and I were married in the Zwingli United Church of Christ by Reverend Zane Pautz. We will celebrate our 35th anniversary together this year.

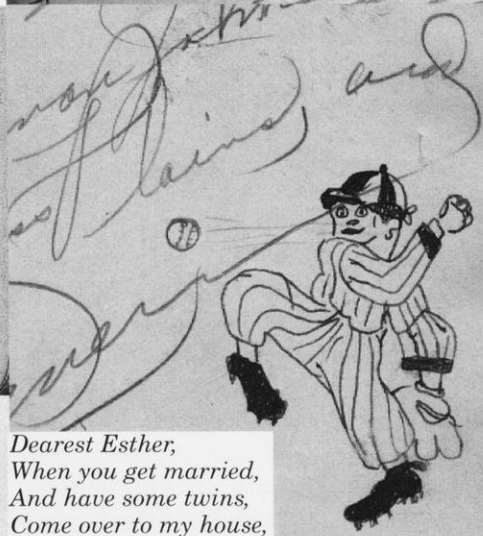
Dear Esther,  
Sugar is sugar,  
Salt is salt.  
If you haven't been kissed,  
It's not my fault.  
-V. Hefty



Dear Esther,  
I'm just a little girly,  
My name is Bonnie Bell.  
I live in old Mt. Vernon,  
Beside the whippoorwill.  
-B.B.W.

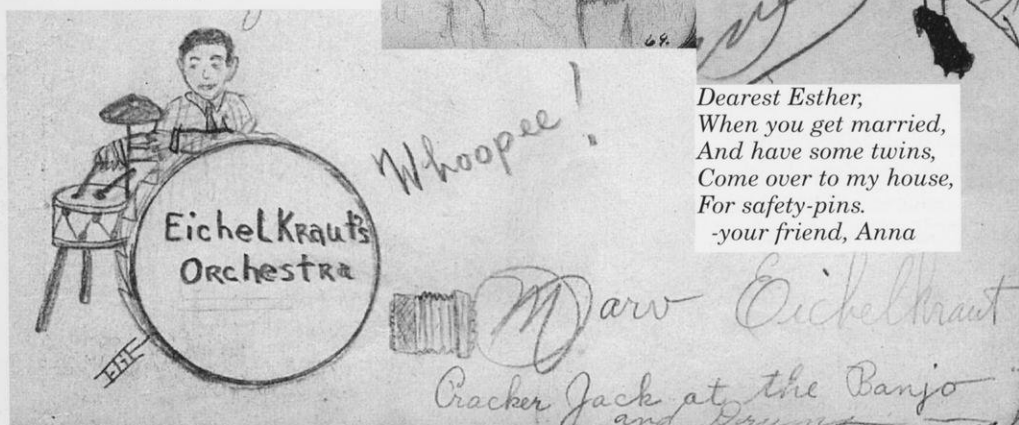


Dear Esther,  
Apples grow in  
California,  
They grow in  
Florida too.  
But it takes a  
state like  
Wisconsin,  
To grow a  
peach like you.  
-B. Berg



Dearest Esther,  
When you get married,  
And have some twins,  
Come over to my house,  
For safety-pins.  
-your friend, Anna

Dear Esther,  
Two in a hammock,  
Oh what bliss.  
When all of a sudden,  
They went like *syf*.  
-Alvin



Pen and pencil drawings by Esther Eggimann, 1937 and 1938. From two of her Mt. Vernon School autograph books that she enhanced with many of her artistic sketches. Her classmates wrote poems and notes to her on the pages. Esther was age 13 at the time.  
-Courtesy of Esther Geiger.

### **Water from Another Time**

*New mown hay on a July morn,  
Grandkids are running through the knee-high corn,  
Sunburned nose and a scabbed up knee,  
From the rope on the white oak tree.  
Just another summer day at Grandpa's farm,  
With Grandma's bucket hanging off my arm,  
You know the old pump's rusty, but it works fine,  
Primed with water from another time.*

*It don't take much, but you gotta have some,  
The old ways help the new ways come,  
Just leave a little extra for the next in line,  
Gonna need a little water from another time.*

*New born cry in the morning air,  
The past and the future are wedded there,  
In the well spring of my sons and daughters,  
The bone and blood of living water.  
And though Grandpa's hands have gone to dust,  
Like Grandma's pump reduced to rust,  
Their stories quench my soul and mind,  
Like water from another time.*

- John McCutcheon

### **BILL & DEB ANDERSON**

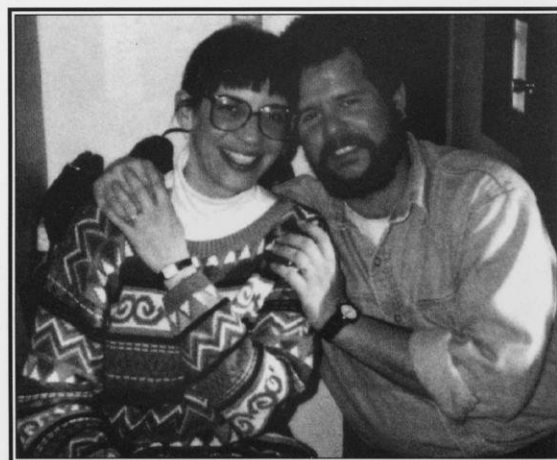
Bill and Deb Anderson reside in the charming 100 year old Victorian home in Mt. Vernon that was once the Mt. Vernon Telephone Company. Bill came from Chicago, and is now a steamfitter for General Heating in Madison. Deb had been an ED teacher in Madison for 15 years and works part time as a waitress at Quivey's Grove. They were married in the Zwingli church in 1990. Deb first took notice of their Mt. Vernon

home when her sister once rented the upper flat. Then, in 1988, the house was up for sale and Bill and Deb bought it from Tricia Yu. When they looked at the abstract of the home they saw that it had changed hands so many times and they wondered if it were actually changing hands at card games!

The Andersons enjoy the serene picaresque beauty of Mt. Vernon, and are looking forward to raising a family here. At present, they have 2 dogs and 2 cats and they wonder if their house should be called "the house of hair." Deb is presently taking piano lessons from Nona Erfurth and both Deb and Bill enjoy cross country skiing and summer walks. They appreciate their friendly neighbors, having a gas station and mechanics nearby, the proximity of the pet food section of the mill, and wish to thank Pastor Jeff at the Zwingli church for his uplifting services every Sunday.

### **THE WILLIAM ARNOLD FAMILY**

The William Arnold family once occupied the house now owned by Frieda Erfurth at the corner of Highway 92 and County Truck G. They had four children, John, who later became Dane County Sheriff, and Orville, Irving, and Mildred. Irving was born January 26, 1891, and was married to Ethel McCaughey on September 30, 1914. They had six children. Together, they operated the William Arnold farm, two miles east of Mt. Vernon on Highway 92. The farm was auctioned



Above: Deb and Bill Anderson and their  
& Left: Victorian home in summer.



on November 18, 1920, and they moved to Madison. Irving and Ethel Arnold are buried in the Mt. Vernon Cemetery.

The auctioneer at the sale of their farm was L. A. Ross. Some of the items that were auctioned were, 17 milk cows, 5 heifers, 6 spring calves, a two-year old bull, and a ten-year old work horse, wt. 1300. Also sold were, 10 tons of hay, 250 bushels of oats, 50 bushels of oats and barley mixed, 20 ft. of silage, 75 chickens, and 5 geese. The machines that were auctioned were, a McCormick grain binder, a Milwaukee corn binder, a new International hay loader, side delivery rake, McCormick mower, corn planter, 2 corn plows, a 16 inch walking plow and a brush breaking plow. Also for sale that day were, a new Stoughton light wagon, an iron truck, wagon box, hay rack, a 3-section drag, calf rack, a disc, a Thomas drill, a bobsled, a light bobsled, a Sharples cream separator, a Mogel 1 h.p gas engine, power washer, a set of work harnesses and driving harnesses, a corn sheller, fanning mill, and 3 ten gallon milk cans. The terms of the sale were, any sum under \$10.00 demanded a cash payment, and all sums over \$10.00 could be paid with a bank note at 7 percent interest after one year.

Below: *Irving Arnold in 1908.*  
*-Courtesy of Arlene Finley.*



## THE CHRIST BAUMGARTNER FAMILY

Christ Baumgartner and Verena Losenegger both came to America from Switzerland at an early age. Christ immigrated with Henry Baumgartner (no relation), and practiced his trade of cheese making for many years at the Argyle factory, the Harker factory, and the Tasher factory, before taking up dairy farming. His friend, Henry Baumgartner, operated a meat market in the village of Mt. Vernon. Christ Baumgartner, along with Carl Colby, John Kittleson, Charles Rue, Luella Lust and Herman Erfurth purchased the Mt. Vernon cheese factory in 1923. They operated it as a farmer's cooperative until 1933 when they sold it to Mike Gisler.

In 1901, Christ married Verena Losenegger. They had three children, a daughter, Clara, and two sons, Christ and Ernest. The parents, Christ and Verena both died in 1965.

Ernest married Delma Moe in 1938, and they have two daughters, Karen (Fletcher), a Verona School teacher, and Donna (Burgette), who is employed at the State Historical Society. Ernest and Delma reside in Verona.

## THE JAMES BEARD FAMILY

The Beard family history dates back to 1850. James P. Beard bought 160 acres from the U.S. Government for \$1.00. In 1884, James and his wife, Saloma, sold the farm to their son, Byron. James Beard died in 1885, and his wife died in 1891. They are buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery.

In 1907, Byron sold the farm to his brother, Raymond Beard. Raymond and his wife, Emma, had 6 children, Nellie, Mable, Bell, Myrtle, Viola, and Otto. In 1915, Raymond's daughter, Mabel, and her husband, George Way, rented the farm. Their five children, Florence (Rudd), Nona (Hagen), Georgia (Post), Gloria (Cracker), and Noel, were born on the farm. Raymond and Emma Beard moved to Mt. Vernon and lived in the house now occupied by Gerald and Geraldine Trainor.

Of the six children born to Raymond and Emma Beard, at this writing only two are living. Viola, age 95, lives in Pine Bluff and Myrtle, of Black Earth, celebrated her 100th birthday on November 19, 1995. The late John Beard, a nephew of Raymond Beard, never married and lived with his

sister, Viney, in Mt. Vernon. Throughout his life he managed odd jobs for local farmers such as cutting and splitting wood, building fences, shocking oats and corn, dressing poultry, digging graves, and later he was the “handy man” at the Koch Brothers’ store. He met his death by falling out of the back of a truck in 1935.

Mt. Vernon was just 49 years old when Myrtle, “Mert”, Beard was born on the Beard farm in 1895. Myrtle married Michael Starczynski in 1922, and together they drove their horse and buggy to Verona, boarded a train and headed for Milwaukee for their honeymoon. Their lives were enriched by 5 children, 42 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

Today, at the age of 101, Myrtle lives in a multiple resident home in Black Earth. Her memory recalls a host of events, such as; living in the factory, dancing all night in the old town hall, having just one milk cow, living with Sam Piper, working for Fred and Ferdinand Koch, and having picnics at the “Big Spring”. Myrtle remembers trading at Chandler’s store because they always had the best prices. Myrtle recalls the names of many people who she knew in Mt. Vernon. Ernie Karn, Dr. Stebbins, and Doc Mitchell, Sam Piper, Fred and Ferdinand, August and Herbert Koch, Bill and Alice Rae, Frank and Mary Moore, Susie Marty, John Beard, Mrs. Lust, John Harker, and Fred Zahler who had the tavern, and so many more. Myrtle is still full of fun and remembers some clever nicknames for those

she knew. If health permits, she hopes to be with Mt. Vernon when it celebrates its 150th anniversary.



Above: *Beard sisters, Viola Bonner age 95, left, and Myrtle Starczynski age 100. -Courtesy of Walter Brink.*



Right: *Myrtle Starczynski.*

## THE JOHN BEUTLER FAMILY

John Beutler was born in 1933, a son of Swiss immigrants, John and Anna (Braun) Beutler. His father was a cheesemaker by trade and the family settled west of New Glarus. John spoke mostly Swiss until third grade. He served in the army in 1956 and 1957, when he was part of a tank battalion in Germany. He was employed at Oscar Mayer from 1952 until his retirement in 1992.

Florence Kollath was born in 1937 to Rodney and Helen Kollath (Dettwiler). She attended Mt. Vernon school and her father operated the Conoco station. John Beutler married Florence Kollath in 1958 in the Zwingli church. The couple raised three boys, Michael, Gary (Angie) and Jon, and a daughter, Debra (Mike Hanna). There are six grandchildren. The family spent much of their leisure time at their Lake Wisconsin cottage. John’s hobbies included old cars and motorcycles as well as carpentry.

John was diagnosed with cancer in 1995. His carpentry skills enabled him to build a steeple which on September 12, 1995, was secured to the top of Zwingli U.C.C.. This steeple would be the last project of John’s as he passed away in March of 1996.

## THE JOHN BISCHOFF FAMILY

Charles Harker and Elizabeth Burnell came to America in 1849 and 1836, respectively, from Yorkshire, England. They were married in the Milwaukee area, and emigrated to the Mt. Vernon area and homesteaded two miles south of Mt. Vernon on Highway 92. Charles Harker died in 1895, and their son, John took over the farm. John Harker married Laura Hale, the daughter of Eldred Hale and Mary Jones Hale who happened to be farm neighbors of the Harkers. John and Laura Harker had two daughters, Hazel and Lola. Hazel married LaVerne Johnson. Lola married John Bischoff (most people knew him as Jack) in 1925. The ceremony took place at her father’s home in Mt. Vernon, and Bernice Moore played piano. When the wedding was over the couple headed for Madison in a car. But the car got stuck in the mud and they had to have the car towed by Laverne Johnson’s team of horses to town. As folks were still skeptical about automobiles, they got a laugh out of seeing the horses pulling the car, and of course there was no gaso-

line wasted on that trip.

Hazel and LaVerne Johnson moved to the Harker farm and Lola and Jack Bischoff moved to the Hale farm. John and Laura Harker moved into Mt. Vernon when they left the farm. Even though John walked with crutches for twenty years, he tended gardens, and harvested berries. In the winter he tended sheep and lambs that were kept in the sheds next to the corner garage in Mt. Vernon. John Harker died in 1947, and Laura had died in 1930.

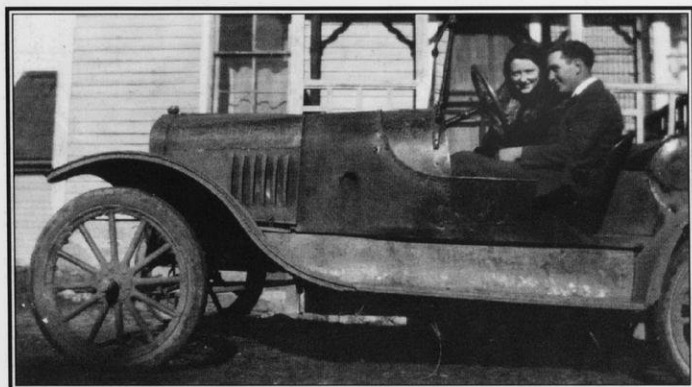
Jack and Lola Bischoff were active in Mt. Vernon affairs. Jack was on the board of directors of the Mt. Vernon Telephone Company until it was sold. He was also an avid Euchre player in the league, and he played baseball with the Mt. Vernon team until he was 35 years old. Jack and Lola were active in the Zwingli Church. Lola was treasurer of the Guild and helped with summer Bible School. She was also a member of the Vernon Valley Sals Homemakers Club. Dancing at Mitchell's Dance Hall in Mt. Vernon, was a favorite Saturday night activity for Jack and Lola. They had two daughters, Mary (Zerbel) and Joanne (Wirth), who both attended school in Mt.

Vernon and enjoyed Play Day, school programs, softball, youth group and choir.



Left: *John B. Harker in 1943. -Courtesy of Mary Zerbel.*

Below: *John Bischoff and Lola Harker in 1924. -Courtesy of Mary Zerbel.*



## **THE BRINK FAMILY**

Bernard Brink was born in Westphalian, Germany, in 1815 and came to this country some years later with a friend. Bernard settled on a farm near Mt. Vernon, on Erb Road. Later, this farm was owned by Ivan Best and presently it is owned by Verlyn Lingard. Bernard Brink moved to what was later known as the Bringold Farm. It is now owned by Keith Miller. All of Bernard Brink's children, were born on the Bringold Farm.

Joseph Brink, one of the sons, attended the old schoolhouse once located on what is now the Oak Hill Cemetery. As a young man, and using oxen, he cleared much of the farmland in the area. David Brink, another of Joseph Brink's children, was born in the township of Primrose. He went to school in the Harker School on Highway 92. He married Rosena Marty, and began farming on the Davidson farm, now owned by Francis O'Connor.

David and Rosena had a son, Walter Brink who was born on the Davidson farm. Walter later married Ruth Legler, from Monticello. They had met one another at a dance in New Glarus. From 1936 until 1940 Walter and Ruth lived in the corner house in Mt. Vernon, next to the Zwingli Church, presently occupied by Libby Sherwood.



Above: *Walter and Ruth Brink on their 60th wedding anniversary at the Zwingli Church. -Courtesy of Ben Goebler.*



Rent at the time was \$10.00 per month, milk was 7 cents a quart, and the monthly grocery bill at Koch's store was \$30.00 per month. Walter and Ruth enjoyed life in Mt. Vernon, especially all of their wonderful neighbors at the time, the Gildens, the Kochs, the Nelsons, the Erfurths, Bernice and Florence Moore, the Eggimans, Ralph and Mable Davis, Otto and Marie Beard, the Martys, the Ways, John Harker, the Mitchells, and many others.

Walter taught school at the Mt. Vernon School for these 4 years. For one summer, 1937, Walter rented the corner garage in Mt. Vernon. He took \$100.00 out of their savings to start up his garage business. But, the garage business was not for Walter and Ruth. Walter taught school in several area schools and in 1943, they moved to the family farm on Highway G, where they have resided for the last 53 years. Walter and Ruth were blessed with 2 children, Donald and Elizabeth (Babler). Donald and his wife, Karen are now the owners of the farm. Walter and Ruth have six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

### **THE DOUGLAS DAHLK FAMILY**

Doug Dahlk's great grandfather immigrated from Mecklenberg-Shwerin, Germany, in 1857. The German spelling for Dahlk was Daelck, but it was changed to Dahlk after he arrived in America. One of the original four Dahlk brothers was Joachim. His granddaughter, Alvina, married William E. Chandler. William's parents, John and Aprinda Chandler, had a general store located on Main Street in Mt. Vernon.

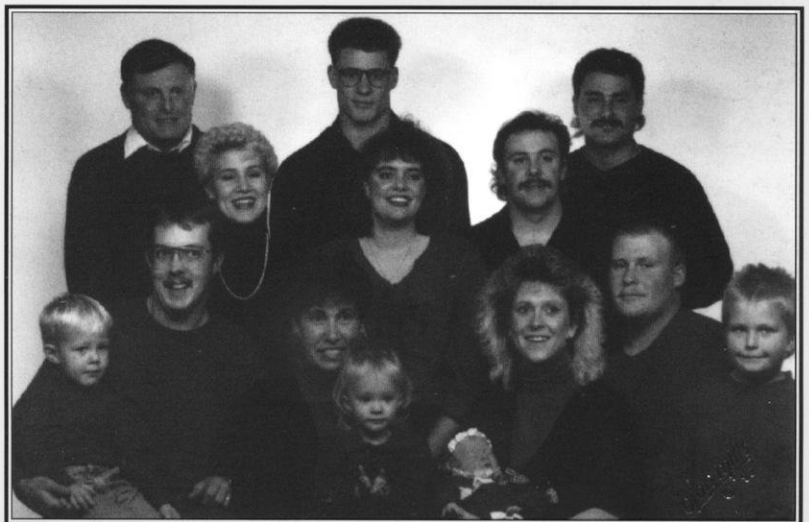
Douglas Dahlk was born in the Township of Springdale, along with a brother Curtis. The Dahlk family later moved to a farm in the Verona Township. Doug Dahlk married Gail Baumgartner and together they operated his father's farm near Verona before they moved to Madison, where Doug was employed as a firefighter for 27 years until he retired. In 1969, Doug and Gail purchased the 82-acre Benford Lee farm from the Dortha "Slim" Calhaun estate. A distinguishing feature of the farm is the eight-sided barn which led them to name the farm the "Octagon Eighty". To their delight, after looking over the abstract, they discovered that Fighting Bob La Follette's father, Josiah, had originally purchased the

land from the territory.

The Benford Lee farm had originally had an old log cabin for a house. Doug and Gail Dahlk enjoyed the hills of the Mt. Vernon area, so they started a new home on the farm in 1971. First they built an exposed basement covered with a steel roof, and for the next two years they continued to reside in Madison during the school year. In 1973, they finished building their raised ranch home and moved in with their children. Doug and Gail Dahlk have five children. Diana and her husband, Jason Borth, live in New Glarus. Daniel and his wife, Danette, reside in Pine Bluff, and Darin, and his wife, Mary, purchased the Emma Lust farmette. They also have a son, Devin, of Madison, and a son, Derek. The Dahlks have four grandchildren.

Doug and Gail Dahlk are members of the Zwingli U.C.C. Their most recent project began by purchasing the Primrose Center School house with hopes of converting it into a retirement home. The school was originally built in 1869 for a cost of \$400.00, and was built on land that was purchased from Knute Johnson for \$10. Stone for the building was quarried from the Jacob Hanna farm, and lumber for the structure was sawed at the Mt. Vernon saw mill. The original stones are being removed, but they will be reused on the new building. Some of the original lumber and flooring will be worked into the new building as well.

Below: *The Doug and Gail Dahlk family. Back row left: Doug, Derek & Devin. Center row left: Diana, Danette & Dan. Front row left: Hans & Jason Borth, Gail & Danielle, Mary Hanna & Brandi, and Darin & Michael.*





Above: *Ralph & Mabel Davis, left, on their wedding day in 1938. Lucille & Ed Cleveland stood up for them.*  
-Courtesy of Jim Davis.

Below:  
*Mabel Davis.*



## RALPH & MABEL DAVIS

Mabel was the adopted daughter of John and Dell (Foye) Korner. She was born Mabel Heinz on April 12, 1898. At one year of age she was adopted by John and Dell. She lived her entire life in Mt. Vernon and died at the age of 91. Ralph Davis was born February 19, 1897, in rural Middleton, Wisconsin. Ralph and Mable were married on October 15, 1938, at their home on Davis St., Mt. Vernon. They farmed their entire lives. Ralph had an 8 N Ford tractor with which he worked his land above the mill hill. Ralph died at the age of 75.

They were active members of the United Church of Christ. Mabel was the treasurer of the township of Springdale for many years, and Ralph served on the park board for a number of years. Mable was the local historian for the area. They were respected very much by everyone in the community and they were close to both of their families.

## WALDO & BETTY DISCH

Waldo Disch was born in Brooklyn Township on November 20, 1925, the son of Cora and William Disch. He attended Alpine rural school in Brooklyn, Wisconsin, and later attended and graduated from Brooklyn High School in 1943. He married Betty Holcomb in 1946. Betty was born in Janesville, Wisconsin, on August 2, 1927, the daughter of Forrest and Hattie Holcomb. She

attended grade school in Janesville and graduated from Janesville High School in 1945. Betty and Waldo met in September of 1945 at the Ace Hi Roller Rink and were married June 15, 1946. With the good Lord willing, they will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in June, 1996.

Waldo worked for Stuessy Feed. Co., Belleville, after graduation. When the Stuessy Feed bought the Mt. Vernon Mill in 1948, Waldo was named manager. Waldo and Betty bought the mill in 1953 and operated it for 30 years, selling it to Ken Seston of Black Earth in 1978.

Betty worked at Wisconsin Telephone Company and Parker Pen before she was married. Then, she worked at the mill in addition to raising their family. Waldo and Betty are blessed with seven children, two boys and five girls. They now have 16 grandchildren who all live within 40 miles of them. Two grandsons are married and another will tie the knot in October of 1996.

The Dischs are members of the United Church of Christ of Mt. Vernon, having joined in 1960. Waldo served on the consistory in past years. Together they served as youth group counselors from 1962 to 1966. Waldo also served on the Mt. Vernon School Board and was president of the board in 1964 when La Follette Heights School was opened.

Waldo and Betty purchased a farm house from Walter and Hilda Losenegger where the Dischs lived from September 1957 until 1969. In 1967, they purchased the Jack Bischoff farm from Mrs. Herman Erfurth. Waldo and Betty still had five kids at home, so they set up a trailer along side of the house for a sleeping area when they moved into the Bischoff farm in 1969.

The operation of the mill consisted of grinding feed, cleaning oats, handling barn lime, fertilizer, seed corn and custom spraying. Waldo continued the spraying business after he sold the mill in 1978. In 1967, they converted a dairy barn into a hen laying operation for 5,600 hens. In 1970, they built a bigger chicken house which housed 20,000 hens. Waldo has been a salesman for Pioneer products since 1980.

## THE DONALD FAMILY

Reverend James Donald and his wife Margaret Strong Donald came to the Mt. Vernon area in 1855 from New York. Here they purchased two 40 acre parcels from Wm. Dryden, who had acquired them from the state. One par-

cel they paid \$1.25 per acre for and the other parcel cost them a yoke of oxen, a wagon and \$10. They had three sons, William, Robert, and John. Rev. Donald picked this area to settle in as it was halfway between two Presbyterian churches, one in Mt. Horeb and the other in Verona.

The eldest son, William was twenty two when the family came to Mt. Vernon. He attended the School of Medicine at Union College in Schenectady, New York. He came back to Wisconsin in 1863 and became Mt. Vernon's first doctor. An accident during a flood in which Dr. Donald's horse went through a bridge caused him to need a crutch for the rest of his life. He went on to invent an attachment for crutches allowing them to be used on ice without slipping. He marketed these attachments and sold a good number of them to others in need. In 1880, his wife, Adeline Zink Donald, died and Dr. Donald moved to Tunnel City, WI, near Tomah.

Robert Donald went to New York for school and did not return to Wisconsin. John Strong Donald, the youngest of the three sons took on the responsibilities of the farm. His father's health was failing and in 1866 he died. John was left to tend to the farm, and his mother moved back east to live with her son Robert. John Strong Donald married Ellen Sweet in April of 1868. Ellen was the daughter of William and Sally Clark Sweet who settled in Springdale township in 1853. Within a year John Strong Donald was stricken with Typhoid and died at the age of 26. Their son, John Sweet Donald, was born shortly after his father had died. Ellen Sweet Donald married John Jones, Jr. in 1882. John Sweet Donald grew up to become influential in politics and he founded the Forest Of Fame Park in Mt. Vernon. He and his wife, Vona De Crow, had three children, of which two died in infancy.

Their daughter, Delma Donald, married James Woodburn in 1923. He was a professor of Civil Engineering who spent many years with the University of Wisconsin, as well as other universities. Delma and James had two sons, Robert and James. Robert and his wife, Nan, live in Minnesota, and James and his wife, Merle, live in Burbank, California. Delma's husband, James, died in 1980. Delma resides in Madison. She and her sons still manage the Donald property and have recently donated some of the land for a county park. The Donald homestead on Highway 92 is on the National Register of Historic Places.

## **THE DYGULSKI & BISANTZ FAMILY**

Jeff Dygulski and Carrie Bisantz moved to Mt. Vernon in August of 1991. They moved here from the Seattle area to be closer to their families who live in the east. They have settled in Mt. Vernon and appreciate the small town charm and the natural beauty of the area. Jeff and Carrie have three children, Erik, age 13, Scott, age 10, and Caitlin, age 9. Jeff is a registered nurse at the Veterans Hospital in Madison, and Carrie is the Computer and Technology Coordinator for the Mt. Horeb School District.

## **THE ALFRED EGGIMANN FAMILY**

Alfred Eggimann immigrated to America from Switzerland at a young age. He came with his mother, two brothers and four sisters when he was just twelve years old. Louise Bartschi arrived in America with her guardian, Reverend Nitardy, at age 16. Louise was placed with Gottfried Eggimann, Alfred's oldest brother, to work for the family. Alfred and Louise later married.

In 1922, Alfred opened his first garage in Mt. Vernon in partnership with the two Colby brothers. It was located in where the telephone exchange now stands on Main Street. In the early 1920's this garage burnt to the ground with the fire spreading to the meat market and the pool hall next door. The Fred Hofer family lived upstairs and ran the butcher shop. Rudy Huepeller ran the pool hall and he also lived on the premises. The fire spread so quickly that they were unable to save anything, the families barely made it out of the buildings with their lives. The heat from the two fires was so intense it cracked plate glass windows across the street.

Alfred Eggimann continued in the garage business and went to work for the Lee Brother's garage on the corner until the depression hit. The Eggimann family then moved to Verona and worked for the Hefty Garage. In 1932, Alfred moved back to Mt. Vernon and bought the old Koch garage from the Colby's and ran that garage until 1962.

Louise Eggimann had an idea to start a restaurant in 1932. She and her daughter Esther, went to the Silvester Co. in Madison and related to them her dream of starting a tavern as her parents had in Switzerland. Esther (Geiger) Eggimann remembered:

*"They listened to her story and filled her*



car up with everything they thought she would need. Mother was so excited, but afraid of what Dad would say. She waited until dark to drive through Mt. Vernon. She didn't want anyone to see the big load in our car. Dad just smiled, he actually was very proud of her. We all worked hard cleaning and building shelves for a back bar and then opened our tavern in 1932. Woodrow Marty was our first customer, he bought a pack of cigarettes. I didn't even know how to make change yet. Mother would get up at four o'clock every morning to bake bread and pies to feed the W.P.A. workers who often had breakfast, lunch and supper at the tavern. My three sisters, Ruth, Lillian and Alycia, helped

with cooking and dishes. I was in seventh grade, and I came

home from school for lunch, and, without taking off my roller skates, I waited on tables."

Throughout the years the Eggimann Tavern had many exciting evenings. Ruth Eggimann Bolliger who still lives in Mt. Vernon next to the tavern recalled that the tavern was hard work for the family but that there were many good times too. Upstairs of the bar there was good music, benefit dances, and even some amateur wrestling matches put on by "Spikedriver" Peterson of Mt. Horeb. "Spike" got his name from being able to drive spikes into boards with his bare hands. The tavern would raffle off a duck or a horse occasionally. The two biggest days in the tavern that Ruth recalled were, the day prohibition ended, and V. J. day. She also remembered catching big fish and turtles in the old mill pond, and all of her teachers at the Mt. Vernon school. Two of her teachers, Pearl Thousand and Margaret Lee, boarded with the Eggimann family. Ruth also recalls having to take those awful goiter pills. During her years at the Mt. Vernon School the children would help plant the Forest of Fame trees and attend the planting ceremonies.

Alfred Eggimann died in 1969 at the age of 76, and Louise died in 1971 at the age of 71. Of their daughters, Ruth married Walter Bolliger, who was a cheesemaker at the Clay Hill Factory near Blue Mounds. They operated the Clover Leaf cheese factory in Stanley, WI for twenty years before retiring to Mt. Vernon in 1977. Alycia married Lester Shutvet and they operated Les and Alycia's Tavern in Mt. Vernon. Lester died in 1977 at the age of 59, and Alycia passed away in 1982, at

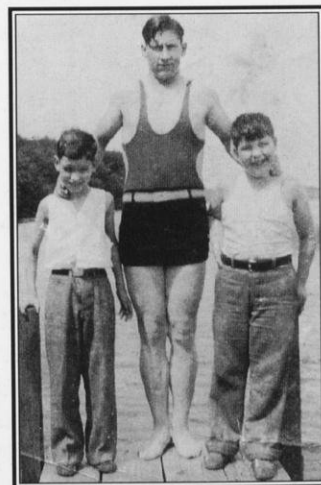


Left:  
Louisa and Alfred Eggimann.  
-Courtesy of Ruth Bolliger.



Left:  
The Eggimann sisters, Ruth, Esther, Alycia, and Lillian in 1943.

Right:  
"Spikedriver" Peterson and friends in 1937.

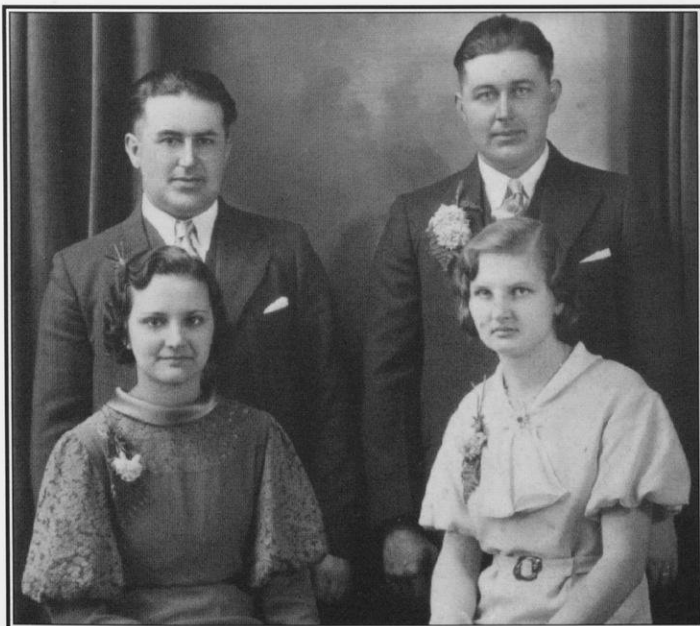


the age of 65. Esther married Al Geiger, who hauled milk in the Belleville area and they now reside in Tomahawk, WI. Lillian married Edwin Bigler, who worked at a plant in Oregon, WI, and they lived in New Glarus. Edwin died in 1992. Another daughter, Esther, lived from 1917 to 1920.

### **THE CARL ERB FAMILY**

Carl Erb and Eleanor Hellpap were married in 1934. They had their wedding dance in Mt. Vernon, with music provided by the Eichelkraut band. The Erbs farmed near Kelly Hill in the town of Springdale for over forty years. Carl and Eleanor raised two daughters, Doris (Daniels), and Marion (Schey). They have five grand children and 7 great grandchildren. Their daughter, Doris, lives on Erb road in the town of Springdale, which was named for Fred and Katherine Erb, who were Carl's parents and were early Swiss immigrants to the township. Carl owned a threshing machine and served the farms close to his own and those over by the Mill Hill on the other side of Mt. Vernon. They had their corn and oats ground at the Mt. Vernon mill. Carl Erb passed away in 1984. That year his family planted a maple tree in the forest of fame park in his memory. Eleanor resides in Mt. Horeb.

Below: *Carl and Eleanor Erb, right, on their wedding day, February 22, 1934. His brother, John, and cousin, Rose Erb, are on the left. -Courtesy of Doris Daniels.*



### **THE JACOB ERB FAMILY**

Jacob and Minnie Erb lived on the property next to H. C. Erfurth on Highway 92, presently the Ace Miller property. The Erbs lived in the area from 1915 until 1923. Jacob was a cheese maker by trade but while in the Mt. Vernon area he mainly farmed. He also ran a meat market in Mt. Vernon in 1907. They had two daughters, Jennie and Clara. Jennie married in Chicago and lived there most of her life.

Clara met her husband Ralph in Monroe, and presently resides in Janesville, Wisconsin. She has many fond memories of the Mt. Vernon area, including the eight years she attended the Mt. Vernon school. Recess was naturally the best time of the day, with spirited games and sports. The teachers that she remembers were Mrs. Tice, Miss Lazerse, Miss Konopa, Viola Moore and Hazel Onstead. The schoolchildren were lucky enough to have had a victrola in the classroom. Sometimes the teacher would let the children play in the large attic above the school.

Clara remembers two bad accidents in town as a child, both were caused by runaway horses on steep hills. In one accident a man was badly hurt and Clara's father and Herman Erfurth heard his cry for help. They picked the man up and brought him to the Erb's home, where he died a few days later of head injuries. The other accident involved Earl Erickson whose pony ran away with the cart, throwing Earl. He survived but was unconscious for 4 days before recovering.

Below: *The Carl Erb family plants a tree in the park in memory of Carl Erb in 1984. -Courtesy of Doris Daniels.*



**THE ERFURTH FAMILY**

Harland Erfurth's great grandfather, Carl "Charlie" Erfurth, homesteaded the original Erfurth farm east of Mt. Vernon. It was later farmed by his grandfather, Herman, and father, Gerald.

Nona Moore's paternal grandmother, Lillian Brader Moore was the daughter of Alfred C. and Ella Chandler Brader. Ella was the daughter of John T. and Aprinda Foye Chandler, all well known residents of the area.

The merger of these two long-time Mt. Vernon families occurred on May 12, 1956 when Harland Erfurth (born 3-24-35 to Gerald and Frieda Goeldner Erfurth) and Nona Moore (born 12-17-35 to R. Earl and Elsie Scheidegger Moore) were married in Mt. Vernon. They established their first home in the house owned by his parents on the corner of Hwy 92 & Davis Streets in Mt. Vernon. A few years later they moved to the Erfurth farm home east of town. In 1965 they moved to the brick home they had built on the hill overlooking Mt. Vernon where they still reside.

Harland & Nona are parents of 4 children; Kay Gladys (2-21-57), Jay Harland (10-24-58), Gay Robert (10-10-60) and May Evelyn (10-10-63). Kay (Mrs. Mitchell Compton) is the mother of

Below: *The Carl & Emma Erfurth family, 1905. Back row: Mary, Emma, Amelia, Katie, Carrie. Middle row: Elsie, Carl, Lizzie, Amel. Front row: Mabel, Herman.*



Above: *The Harland & Nona Erfurth family together celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary, May 12, 1996. Harland's mother, Frieda, is on the left.*

Erica Marian Dill (12-19-81) and Dustin Harland Dill (5-9-83). Jay married Diana Hagen and they are the parents of Alex Jason (7-14-87). Diana also has a son, Scott Schwartz (3-27-67) who is married to the former Dawn Warren. They have a son Benjamin Warren (12-18-95) and live in the Milwaukee area. Both Kay's and Jay's families reside in the Madison area. Gay married Marijean Hill and they are the parents of twins, Jacob Robert and Jaimee (4-8-92). They reside in Oshkosh, WI. May married Gregory McKinney and they are the parents of Jason Paul (3-14-90) and Adam Michael (8-2-93). They reside in West Salem, WI.

Extended family includes Harland's sister, Geraldine Evelyn Erfurth (1-19-39) who married Gerald T. Trainor on May 12, 1959. Nona has two brothers, Richard Earl Moore (12-31-40) who married Karen Avant on September 5, 1964 and resides in Mt. Horeb; and Ronald Robert Hoore (4-12-44) who resides near Mt. Vernon on a part of the original Moore farm.

Harland has owned and operated a blacksmith shop/service station business in Mt. Vernon since 1956. He began his operation in the old blacksmith shop formerly owned by Miner Marty and in 1959, purchased the garage on the corner of Hwy 92 and Davis Street from Orville Showers. In 1970 his brother-in-law, Gerald





Trainor, became his partner and the business became know as Erfurth-Trainor Citgo. After Harland's father died in 1976, they purchased his bulk delivery service known as Jerry's Bulk Service, and continue to operate it as another phase of their business. Harland has served as treasurer of the Mt. Vernon Park Board and is presently serving as a director of the Mt. Vernon Cemetery Board. He also serves on the Memorial Committee of the Zwingli United Church of Christ in Mt. Vernon. In the late 60's and early 70's, he was a member of the Mt. Vernon Tug-O-War Team which erected the shelter house in the Mt. Vernon Park in 1971. Playing softball and bowling have long been favorite sports of Harland's. He has served as president of the Mt. Horeb Golf Bowl City League for many years. He was the owner of the first snowmobile in Mt. Vernon in 1968.

In addition to bookkeeping responsibilities for Harland's business, Nona began serving as Springdale Township Treasurer in 1967 and continues in that position today. She has served as church pianist and organist at Zwingli United Church of Christ, Mt. Vernon, and at Mt. Horeb Evangelical Free Church where she is presently employed as part time church secretary. For the past 25 years, she has taught piano privately. Over 140 young people and adults are numbered among her present and former students. Presently she serves as a regional representative for Stonecroft Ministries, an international outreach organization headquartered in Kansas City, MO. Both Harland and Nona are avid supporters of this ministry along with several others including the local Young Life chapter which they helped establish in the mid 1970s.

## THE DON FRYE FAMILY

Marilyn Kollath Frye moved to Mt. Vernon in the 1930's with her parents, Rodney and Helen Kollath. Her Father and Mother owned and operated the gas station in Mt. Vernon. Rodney also operated a bulk plant serving the fuel needs of area farms and homes. Marilyn went to school in Mt. Vernon and recalls some of her teachers...Ernest Leuthi, Jane Doyle, and Laura Norslien. Marilyn married Donald Frye in 1957 in the Zwingli U.C.C.. Don was from Mineral Point, Wisconsin and the son of Earl and Paula Frye. Earl, affectionately known as "Bud" Frye by all who knew him, was a skilled machinist and mechanic who earned the reputation of being able to fix anything. In 1958, Don and Marilyn moved into their "House on the Hill," which became the site of the annual "Halloween Bonfire"...a Mt. Vernon tradition since the late 1960's. Don and Marilyn have three sons: David, Jerry and Dan.

David married Karen Hansen from Wausau. They have three children—Andy, age 11, Amy, age 8 and Jennifer, age 5. The children usually make the 270 mile trip with their parents, from their home near Comstock, Wisconsin, to participate in Mt. Vernon's annual 4th of July Parade. Dave loves the outdoors and spent as much time as possible during his youth with his dog and ever present companion "B.C.", hunting and hiking the idyllic fields and hills around Mt. Vernon and fishing its trout laden stream.

Jerry also an avid outdoors man, now lives near Blanchardville and will be remembered as the one who built and drove the "Batmobile" which was actually a kit car replica of the Porsche 917 competition car. The car was shipped to Mt. Vernon and arrived literally in pieces. Jerry spent nearly a year building it. When he finally got it



Right:

*The "Batmobile" kit car that was ordered and assembled by Jerry Frye in 1979.*

on the road, its' low, sleek black silhouette and raised gull wing doors attracted a lot of attention and earned it the Batmobile nickname. He also "terrorized" the neighborhood with his model rockets which he built and launched skyward from his yard on top of the hill.

Dan married Rachel Rathert from St. Louis. They are at this time purchasing their first home in Kirkwood, a suburb of St. Louis. Dan also enjoyed the outdoors. As a tot, he survived an incident when he and his two brothers were tubing down the Mt. Vernon Creek. Dan fell out of his tube and was pulled under the flood gates by the current. He emerged safely on the other side just wanting to know if they were "near land"! As a youngster, he satisfied his taste for thrills by racing down the hill from home on his Big Wheel, which he later abandoned for a go-kart and later an off-road cycle.

All three attended LaFollette School. (Dave started his schooling at the Mt. Vernon school until the construction of LaFollette had been completed.) All three boys spent many hours exploring and enjoying the natural beauty of the outdoors surrounding their home. Marilyn and Don feel very fortunate to have lived and raised their family in Mt. Vernon.

### **THE GARFOOT FAMILY**

In 1851, Francis Woodward purchased 160 acres from the United States government, and in 1855, James Johnston bought two other parcels from the United States. Then, in 1905, Carl Gonstead purchased this property from a Samuel Christen. Carl and his wife raised four sons and one daughter, Eloid, Clarence (a Mt. Horeb chiropractor), Arthur, Merton (a Monroe chiropractor) and Grace (Sandven). Carl Gonstead and his wife later moved to Mt. Horeb, and they then rented out the farm.

In 1951, Earl and Francis Garfoot moved to this farm from Cross Plains. They rented the farm from Carl Gonstead for six years. In 1956, Carl Gonstead died, and the farm became the Gonstead Estate. The Garfoots rented until 1958, at which time they purchased the farm from the Gonsteads. It consisted of 250 acres. In 1989, they bought another 90 acres from John Eichelkraut's farm, so all total, the Garfoot farm is now 340 acres. Earl Garfoot has been chairman of the Township of Primrose for 14 years as well as his involvement with many other civic affairs.

In 1963, the original house burned and a new one was built. Earl and Frances Garfoot continue to live in this house. The original barn and a small utility shed are all that remain of the original buildings. Their two sons, Duane and Dave have taken over the operation of this farm, along with other rented land. Duane lives up the road about a quarter of a mile, and Dave and his wife Robyn built a new home on the farm a few years ago. Earl and Francis also have two daughters, Cindy, who married Tim Sutter, and lives on a farm near Hollandale with their four sons, and, Lori, who married Gary Snyder and lives in Verona with their daughter Emily. Lori works for Madison Endodontists and Gary is employed at Wisc. Brick & Block.

### **THE GILDEN FAMILY**

Ernest and Julia (Nelson) Gilden moved to the Mt. Vernon area in 1922. Ernest was hired for lineman work with the then fledging Mt. Vernon Telephone Company. In 1942, Ernest was elected president and general manager of the company, a position he held until 1960 when he stepped down to vice-president. Ernest retired in 1963.

In 1949, Julia died. Then, in 1950, Ernest married the former Erna Peterson, and in 1958, they left Mt. Vernon to be closer to the Mt.



Right:  
*Ernie and  
Julia Gilden  
and their  
son, Jerry.  
-Courtesy of  
Raymond  
Gilden.*

Vernon Telephone Company office in Verona while the company converted over to the "dial" system. Erna died in 1970 and Ernest died in 1971.

Ernest and Julia had two sons, Allen and Gerald. Both Allen and Gerald graduated from Mt. Vernon Grade School. Allen Gilden left for the Army in 1944, and later married Marge Babbage from Louisville, Kentucky. Marge died in 1992, and Allen and their five children, Cheryl, Spencer, Bryan, Carol and Greg, and all of their families, now reside in Michigan.

In 1955, Gerald Gilden married Marie Smith and settled in Mt. Vernon. Gerald was a well-known accordionist who played solo for several years and then teamed up with other musicians to form the popular Alpine Brass Dance Band. Gerald and Marie had six children. Raymond, the eldest, married the former Debbie Onsager in 1973. They have lived in Mt. Vernon for 38 years. Raymond works for Badgerland Dry Wall and was quite involved with getting the Mt. Vernon Deer Creek Sportsman's Club settled into their new clubhouse. Debbie manages childrens day care in her home. Raymond and Debbie have two children, Robert and Robin. Robert works for Staley's Plumbing and Heating and Robin works at the Mt. Horeb dentist office.

Gerald and Marie's other children include, Julie and her daughter, Janice, Vicky and her husband, Scott Staley, and their children, Josh and Jessica, Mary Jo and her husband, Bill Markham, and their children, Angela and Brandon, Scott and his daughter, Marissa, and Gerald and Marie's youngest daughter, Karen. Three of Gerald's children, Raymond, Julie and Vicky, attended the Mt. Vernon school, before transferring to LaFollette Heights Grade School. Gerald and Marie, and all of their family live in or near Mt. Vernon, where their hearts are a part of the community.

### **THE BEN GOEBLER FAMILY**

Ben T. Goebler was born January 20, 1926, in Primrose Township. Darleen Trainor was born December 24, 1930, in Springdale Township. They married June 30, 1951, at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in Perry Township. They have lived in Mt. Vernon, for 45 years.

Ben and Darleen owned and operated Benny's General Store from 1952 until 1959. Ben was caretaker of the Mt. Vernon Forest of Fame Park for 35 years. He was also president of the park board and a director. Darleen worked as a nursing assistant for 15 years. She has been with



Left:  
*The Ben Goebler family. Back row left: Daniel Elsing, Joleen, Jeffrey & Deborah Goebler. Front row left: Ben, Darleen, Jennifer.*



the Verona A & W Family Restaurant for 9 years. They purchased the Nelson/Gilden factory home in 1974. They opened a grocery and liquor store there, named "The Shamrock Corner Quick Stop" in 1974, and they closed the store in 1978. They still reside there, but are retired.

Darleen and Ben Goebler have three children. Jeffrey Francis, was born in 1956, and was married to Deborah Disch in 1983. He is employed at the Sub-Zero Freezer Company as a Service Technical Advisor. His wife, Debbie, is an optometric technician at Group Health Cooperative, and they reside in the Verona area. Joleen Mary Goebler was born in 1959, and was married to Daniel Elsing in 1992. Joleen is employed at Cuna & Affiliates in Middleton, and Dan is a farmer and they reside in the Belleville area. Jennifer Renee was born in 1962. She is employed at PaineWebber, Inc. as a stock broker. She presently resides in Madison. This family has a great love for, and many fond memories of Mt. Vernon.

### THE ERNEST E. GOEBLER FAMILY

Ernest Goebler and his brother, Max Goebler, emigrated to America, from Switzerland, in the early 1900s. They came to this country to find work, so that they could send money back home to help support their mother and brothers and sisters. Their father had died at an early age.

They worked at many jobs, from lumber jacking to hired hands on a farm, and eventually cheese making became their skilled trade.

Max Goebler, who did not marry, went on to serve in World War I and spent the last years of his life in King, Wisconsin. He lived to be 92 years old and is buried at the Veteran's home in King, WI. Ernest Goebler, was married in 1922 to Lena Gerber in Freeport, Illinois. They had a

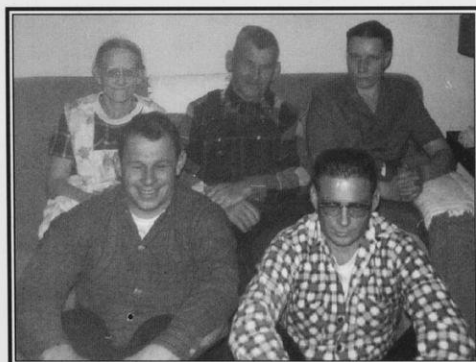
daughter, Dorothy Lena, born in 1923, a son, Bernhardt Theodore, born in 1926, and another son, Ernest Herman, born in 1927. Ernest and Lena and their family lived most of their lives near Mt. Vernon. He retired from the Dane County Highway Department in 1950. Ernest died at the age of 90 years. Lena and their daughter, Dorothy, lived in a duplex owned by their son, Bernhardt. Lena died in 1982. She and her husband are buried in the Mt. Vernon Cemetery. Dorothy and her brother Ernest still reside in Mt. Vernon. Ernest is a veteran of World War II.

### THE ALFRED GUYER FAMILY

Ruth (Peterson) Guyer was born on April 26, 1910, in Blanchardville, Wisconsin. She went to Forward School and then to the Dixon School. Ruth worked at the Swiss embroidery factory in New Glarus. Alfred (Fred) Guyer was born on July 21, 1906, in Switzerland. He came to the United States with his family when he was five years old. Ruth and Fred were married on February 10, 1930. They had their wedding dance at the dance hall in Mt. Vernon with the Eickelkrauts providing the music.

Ruth and Fred lived for two years in Primrose. Fred was a patrolman for that township. They moved to Mt. Vernon and lived in the second floor apartment of the George and Margaret Lee home. Fred became a patrolman for Springdale and later worked for Dane County as a grader operator for 26 years.

Ruth remembered when electricity was first



Left:  
Clockwise  
from back  
left: Lena,  
Ernest,  
Dorothy,  
Ernie and  
Ben Goebler  
in 1961.



Right:  
Fred and  
Ruth  
Guyer on  
their 50th  
wedding  
anniversary in  
1980.

installed in the Lee home in 1932. Prior to that they had to get water from Herbert Koch's pump because they did not have running water. In 1936, they built their home on Hwy 92 in Mt. Vernon. Ruth is known for her very talented "green thumb." Ruth and Fred had one son, Robert Guyer. He was born March 8, 1934, and went to school through eighth grade in Mt. Vernon, graduating from high school in Mt. Horeb. He presently resides in Hayward, Wisconsin. Robert and his wife, Ruth have two daughters, Tammy and Karri LaBarre, and two grandsons. Ruth says that the biggest changes that she has noticed in Mt. Vernon over the past 60 years are the new homes that have been built and the new residents that have moved there.

Fred and Ruth used to fish in the old mill pond and Fred enjoyed trapping in the creek in his retirement years. He also hunted fox and raccoons. His trout fishing secrets were guarded, but Mary Jo Brinkmann, his visiting nurse from Mt. Horeb recalled that she learned his secrets for catching mayflies with a piece of screen to use as bait for trout fishing. Alfred Guyer died on May 31, 1989.

### **BILL & CINDI HAACK**

When approaching the Mt. Vernon Mill and continuing on, one will cross a "cattle gate" and enter the farm operated by Bill and Cindi Haack and their two children. They purchased the 250 acre farm in 1982. Previous owners included, the Evans Estate, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Lehnherr and Mr. and Mrs. Earl R e t t e n m u n d . Approximately 6 acres is included in the plat of Mt. Vernon. In order to enter or leave the

Right:

*Left to right: Ruth Guyer, Della Way, Frieda Erfurth, Hedwig Hankel and Herbert Hankel in 1995.  
-Courtesy of Chris Hynek.*



farm one has to enter Mt. Vernon.

The Haacks have a milking herd of 60 cows. Besides his dairy herd, Bill's hobby is the raising of Rocky Mountain Horses. They vary from 14 to 16 hands tall. They are an all purpose horse and are easy to ride. They have a four beat lateral gait, which is natural and means that the horse will have three hooves on the ground at any time while stepping.

### **THE HERBERT HANKEL FAMILY**

Hermann and Wilhelmina Hankel, with their eight children, left Ringleben, Germany, for Bremen, where they boarded the ship Tuisko. They arrived at the Port of New York on May 10, 1861, twenty-five years prior to the erection of the Statue of Liberty. Their final destination was to be Wisconsin. Three of the children, Wilhelm, Pauline and Gustove, remained in Wisconsin. The others decided to seek their fortunes elsewhere, and left in covered wagons for Nebraska.

Pauline Hankel and William Lust were joined in marriage. Their children were, Lena, Richard, Luise (Mrs. Emil Koch), Oscar, Lydia (Mrs. Bob Davis), Pauline (Mrs. Sydney Foye), Hattie (Mrs. John Schettler), and Alva. Wilhelm (William) Hankel, who was born, June 7, 1840, was joined in marriage to Johanna Wilhelmina Fredricka Morig. Their children were Frederick Heinrich Herman, and also Arthur and Emil, and an adopted son, Karl George. Arthur died as a teenager due to a firecracker mishap, and Emil moved to Minnesota.

Herman remained on the farm with his parents and was united in marriage to Hannah Kollath in 1896. They lived for many years on the farm on Highway G, next to the Mt. Vernon Cemetery. Together, they had five sons, Alfred, who settled in Westfield, NY, Edward resided in Chicago, and Robert moved to Madison. George stayed in the Mt. Vernon and Mt. Horeb areas, and Herbert remained on the farm. George and Herman both were highway patrolmen, using horses until trucks were used. Herman served on the Town Board of Springdale and was caretaker of the Mt. Vernon Cemetery.

One hot, humid afternoon in the fall of 1928, Herman, as road patrolman, was cutting weeds along the highway as he saw a tornado approaching in the valley. He decided to take shelter in his truck, but was unable to get all of the way inside before the tornado funnel picked up Herman and the truck and carried them some distance before the truck hit a road bank and stopped. Fortunately, Herman was not injured and the truck was not damaged. For a few years Hannah and Herman lived in Mt. Horeb after leaving the farm. They returned to Mt. Vernon where they lived in the Koch house across from the church.

Herbert Hankel and Hedwig Blaser were united in marriage in 1937. Two sons were born. Richard now lives in Maryland, and Wayne in Iowa. After eight years of farming, in 1946, they moved to Mt. Vernon after purchasing the feed mill property and house from Fred and Ferdinand Koch. An electric grist mill was installed for grinding feed. Water power was still used for the elevators. Late in 1948, the feed mill was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Fred Stuessy of Belleville. For a number of years Herbert delivered Mobil fuel out of Mt. Horeb. When the rural schools began to consolidate, Herbert provided bus transportation. Later, he drove for the Mt. Horeb Area Schools. Herbert Hankel also served on the Zwingli church consistory, the Mt. Vernon School Board, and the Mt. Vernon Cemetery Association.

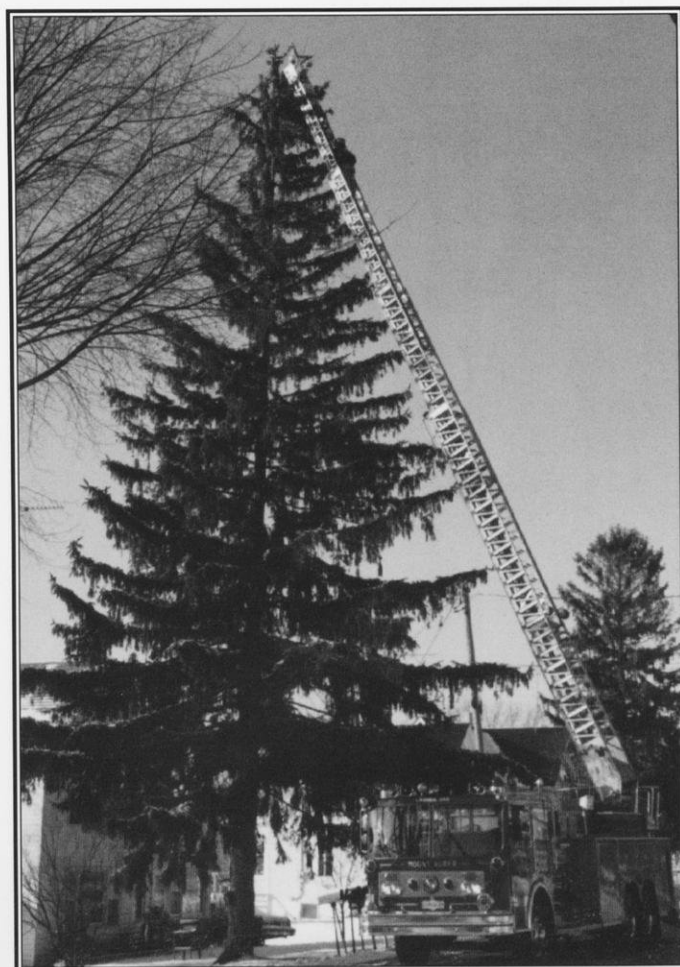
### **THE BUDDY & CHRIS HYNEK FAMILY**

In 1983, Buddy and Chris Hynek drove through Mt. Vernon and saw three houses for sale. They loved the town and put bids in on all three of the homes. Their bid was accepted on the one that they wanted the most, and since December of 1983 they have been residing in Mt. Vernon next to the Trainors. Chris said that



Above: *Chris, Buddy, Ashley and Matt Hynek.*

Below: *The Mt. Horeb Fire Dept. helps out to place the star on top of the tall pine in Mt. Vernon. Other years, Buddy Hynek would climb up with the star!*  
*-Courtesy of Chris Hynek.*





everyone in town knew the day that they moved in because their U-haul trailer hit the power line pole and caused everyone's lights to flicker.

Buddy is originally from Wisconsin Dells, and Chris came from Madison. Chris is a photographer for the Mt. Horeb Mail and takes pictures for the Mt. Horeb Fire Dept. and for graduations and weddings. Buddy is a mechanic for Engineering Industries in Verona. Buddy and Chris have two children, Ashley is age 11 and Matt is 8 years old. The family enjoys camping in the summer, and each winter they light the star at the top of their tall pine tree in Mt. Vernon. The first couple of years Buddy would climb the tree to place the star, but the neighbors feared for his life, and now the Mt. Horeb Fire Dept. ladder truck helps out.

### **THE KETELBOETER FAMILY**

Virgil and Millie Ketelboeter purchased the Eggiman Bar from Alfred Eggiman in 1962, and changed the name to Virgil's Valley Inn. In 1976, they moved into the apartment building next door to the bar, which they purchased from Ames Austin. The Ketelboeters sold the bar in 1976 to Rick Duerst, Jack Kelly and Dick Miller. In 1977, Virgil and Millie moved to Harmony Grove, WI, where Millie still resides. Virgil died in August of 1988. The Ketelboeters had four children. Richard lives in Harmony Grove and works at Madison Gas & Electric and also has a taxidermy business. David lives in Verona and works at Tuttle Printing in Monona. Barbara lives in Middleton and works at Nicolet Instrument, and Dale lives south of Mt. Vernon in Primrose township. He is a postal worker in Verona. There are three grandchildren, Jeremy, Zachery and Denise, and five step-grandchildren, Lori, Jimmie, Shawn, Laurie and Brenda.

### **THE KOLLATH FAMILY**

Johan Kollath migrated to America in the mid-1800's from his native country of Germany. Some time later, he married Ernestine Marquart, and in June of 1862, together they settled on land just northeast of Mt. Vernon, in section 35. Today, one hundred and thirty four years later, the land is still owned by descendants of the Arthur Kollath family, Robert and James Kollath, and Jane Lund.

Johan and Ernestine Kollath had six chil-



Above: *Wedding photo of William Kollath and Blanche Jones, March 27, 1901.*

dren, William, Carl, Leopold, Herman, Henrietta, and Hannah. William Kollath worked in a blacksmith shop in Mt. Vernon. On March 27, 1901, William married Blanche Jones, and they moved into the Kollath homestead and reared four sons, Walter, Arthur, Rodney, and John. William and Blanche farmed, and in 1946 they built and moved into a new home in Mt. Vernon, located across from the park. William died in 1951, and Blanche in 1958.

Walter Kollath married Cressie Adams, and they had two children, Roy and Alice. Walter operated a neighboring farm before he became a mechanic for Northwest Airlines and the family moved to Minneapolis.

Arthur Kollath married Louise Meyer and they settled on the Kollath homestead. They had three children, two sons, Robert and James, and a daughter, Jane. Arthur Kollath was employed by Wisconsin Power & Light, and later did electrical work on his own. He and Louise purchased the Kollath homestead farm in November of 1945. Arthur and Louise farmed until 1977. Louise died in 1990, and Arthur in 1994.

John Kollath farmed for some years. He held the position of Town Assessor for Springdale township, and did bookkeeping. He later worked at a razor repair shop in Madison. John lived with his parents in their home in Mt. Vernon, and today, John still resides in the home across

from the park.

Rodney Kollath married Helen Dettwiler and their family included two daughters, Marilyn and Florence. Marilyn is married to Don Frye and they live in Mt. Vernon. They have three sons David, Danny and Jerry. Florence married John Beutler of New Glarus and they have a daughter, Debbie, and three sons, Mike, Gary and Jon. Rodney Kollath farmed and later owned the Kollath Service in Mt. Vernon, now the Erfurth and Trainor Citgo. Rodney was a state employee until his death in 1959. Helen lives in Verona at present.

In 1965, Robert Kollath and his wife, Mary Lou (Colney) moved into their new home built on the family homestead. They had two children, William and Jennifer. In 1991, William also built a new home on the homestead, and he resides there with his wife, Kathy and their three children, Lori Ann, Ryan, and Spenser. Jennifer married David Brauer of Milwaukee, and they now live in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

James Kollath married Peggy Wild. They live in Waunakee, with their son Jeff. Jane Kollath married Jack Lund, and they reside in Verona. A daughter Lori, married Rick Morland, and they live in Belleville and have one daughter, Meggan, and a son, James, who lives in Madison.



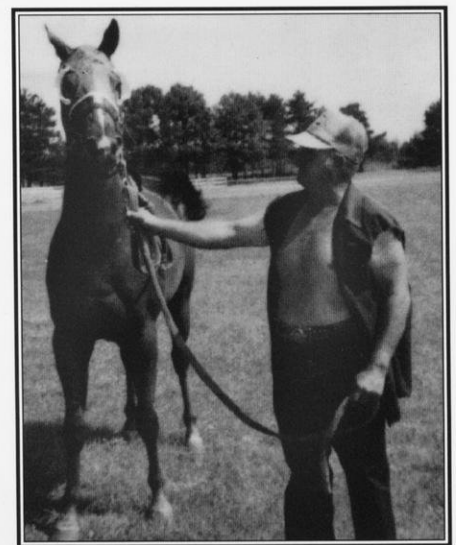
Above: Rodney, Walter and Arthur Kollath.

## BUD & MARY LARSON

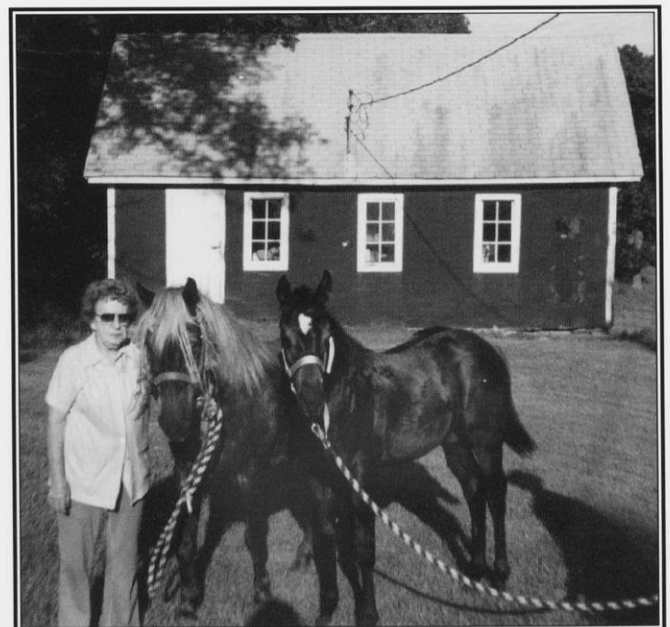
Bud and Mary Larson, who reside on Penn Street, in Mt. Vernon, purchased land from Rodney Kollath and built their home in the late 1950s. They have no children of their own, but have a host of relatives with whom they share

their love. Their faithful dog, Casey, was their household companion for 9 years. Bud and Mary have also taken to riding and racing horses in recent years. They now have five horses. Their horses have been sanctioned by the "Quarter-Horse Club" and have been in races here in Wisconsin as well as in Illinois. In one year they entered 13 races. All of the horses were purchased, except one. Bud has trained them to lie down, then he can mount them with ease. Mary also loves to ride. During the summer months, both Bud and Mary can be seen in the pasture across the street from their home riding the range.

Right:  
Bud Larson  
and "Missy" in  
1990.



Below:  
Mary Larson  
with 4-month  
old quarter-  
horses.



## GEORGE & MARGARET LEE

George Lee was born in the township of Primrose in 1900. Margaret B. Einerson was born in the town of Perry in 1903. Her parents were Ben and Elsie Milestone Einerson. She went to Teacher's College in Platteville, and her first year of teaching was in the remote town of Zeona in South Dakota, where she rode a horse to the school. After a year of fighting off rattlesnakes, prairie fires and coyotes on her way to and from school, she returned to Wisconsin. Meanwhile, George had become a partner in the Lee Brothers Implement Company located at the present corner garage in Mt. Vernon. They sold Essex and Chevrolet cars and Red River threshing machines.

George had met Margaret at a Christmas house party and they were married on Christmas Eve in 1928. Together they resided in Mt. Vernon. Their home is now owned by John Hoffman. Margaret taught at the McPherson, and other rural grade schools until 1960. The only school that she did not teach at was Mt. Vernon. Margaret Lee consistently read five books a week throughout her life. George later became a partner in Mt. Horeb selling Allis-Chalmers machinery. George and Margaret had two children, Elsie (Donald Charleston) and Rolland (Amanda), and four grandchildren. In 1980, Margaret and George moved to Black River Falls, and later to DeForest, WI. George Lee died in 1989, and Margaret died on April 10, 1996, at the age of 92.

Margaret Lee had fond memories of all of the children she taught. She remembered one day in the fall when a tornado came through the area and she had to keep the kids from getting too scared. That tornado took the roof off the Gordon School. She also remembered the year they repaired Highway G, between Highway J and Mt. Vernon. The road was deep mud and Herbert Hankel's father often had to get his horses out to pull cars out of the mud. But he never had to pull Margaret's car out of the mud, she was a good driver.

## THE ERNEST LEHNHERR FAMILY

Ernest Lehnherr was born August 15, 1922, in Perry Township. He moved to the Mt. Vernon area in 1933 with his parents, who were Swiss immigrants, and one brother and two sisters. They lived on a farm south of Mt. Vernon on

county highway G. Ernest married Cecilia Oppliger, who was born September 30, 1919, in a cheese factory near Verona. She moved to the Mt. Vernon area in 1920, with her parents, who were also Swiss immigrants, and two brothers and two sisters. They lived and made cheese in the Standard cheese factory outside of Mt. Vernon off of county highway U.

Ernest and Cecilia both attended Primrose Center Grade School and the Zwingli church in Mt. Vernon. They both were baptized and confirmed in the Zwingli church. Ernest and Cecilia were married on April 29, 1943, at the Zwingli church in Mt. Vernon and moved to a farm behind the Mt. Vernon Mill in 1946. They farmed together there until 1977. They had three children. Jerry Lehnherr was born May 4, 1947, and still lives in the Mt. Vernon area, on top of the Mt. Vernon Hill. Barbara Lehnherr (Seldal) was born October 17, 1950. She lived in the Mt.



Left:  
*Cecilia and Ernest  
Lehnherr in 1935.*

Below:  
*The Ernest Lehnherr family  
in 1994. Standing: Jerry  
and Barb.  
Seated: Karen and Ernest.*





Vernon area until 1983 when she moved to Verona. She now lives in Madison with her husband, David, and two daughters and two step-daughters. Karen Lehnherr (Tollefson) was born on September 30, 1955. She lives in Black Earth on a dairy farm with her husband, Dale, and their two children. Jerry, Barbara and Karen attended the Mt. Vernon Grade School. Karen attended until the school closed and the LaFollette Heights School opened. The three children were baptized and confirmed in the Zwingli church and Jerry and Ernest are still members of the church. Cecilia passed away in July, 1991.

In November, 1950, Ernest and Cecilia Lehnherr experienced a house fire. They had to live with Cecilia's parents while Ernest and his bother, Alfred, repaired the damage from the fire. They were able to move back into their home in late December of 1950. In February of 1977, Ernest and Cecilia sold their farm to Earl and Rose Rettenmund and then moved to Verona where Ernest still lives. He travels out to Mt. Vernon to visit his son Jerry quite regularly.

### **THE DONALD LOSENEGGER FAMILY**

Farms remaining in the family name for over a century are rare. The Donald Losenegger Farm on Highway G, southwest of Mt. Vernon, is one such farm. The "Century Farm" citation of honor was awarded to the Losenegger family at the Wisconsin State Fair on August, 9, 1995. The Loseneggers are the 4th generation to live on their farm just a little over a mile from Mt. Vernon. The original farm was purchased in 1867 by Winifred's great-grandfather, John Tasher. The farm the Loseneggers live on now was purchased in 1884. The farms were then purchased by Werner Tasher and another house and barn were added to the property. Winnie's parents, Edwin and Iva Oimoen bought the farm from Werner and Rika Tasher in 1929, and Don and Winnie purchased it from the Oimoens in 1965.

The Loseneggers have 4 children. Mark, an Air Force retiree, his wife, Sherri, and their two children, Knut and Annie, live in Mt. Horeb. Mark works at the Mt. Horeb Farm Co-op. He is a fourth generation council member at Zwingli U.C.C.. Laurel and her husband, Rich McVicar, live in Middleton and Laurel is employed at UW Hospital. Michael and his wife, Rayne, and two children, Corey and Tasher, and soon to be adopted daughter, Matea, live in Mt. Horeb. Michael is

a 1st vice president of M & I Bank. Lois and her husband, Harry Bohms, and two children, Amy and Caitlin, live in Belleville. Lois is also employed at UW Hospital.

All of the Loseneggers, except Lois, attended the Mt. Vernon Grade School and all attended the Zwingli United Church of Christ. Donald's parents, Walter and Hilda Losenegger, moved to the farm originally owned by the Jens Shelstad family in 1948. They sold the farm and moved to Mt. Vernon across the street from the church. When Walter died in 1976, Hilda sold the house and moved to Verona and lived there until her death in 1993. Both were very active in the Zwingli Church.

### **THE ADAM LUST FAMILY**

Adam Lust and his wife, Martha Maria Sthromel Lust, and their ten children, sailed for America from the Province of Saxony, Gorsleben, Germany, in the spring of 1850. It took them 40 days to cross the ocean, a journey which was difficult for all of them. Upon landing, they stayed in New York for a week to recover from sea sickness. Adam then hired a man with a team of horses to take the family to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They continued west and settled in Mt. Vernon. Adam's sister, Christian Morig, had come to Mt. Vernon two years before. Adam built one of the first log cabins and a blacksmith shop in Mt. Vernon. He was a blacksmith by trade and had saved money in Germany from his blacksmith business. In the spring of 1851, he decided to buy land from the government. He walked to Mineral Point to get the deed for the land which became the Lust Farm, just one half mile from Mt. Vernon. The family worked hard to clear the land and also built a home and a barn.

In those days, traveling preachers conducted services once a month in settlers homes. In 1855, they built a church on land donated by Christian Morig. It was an Evangelical denomination and was dedicated by Bishop Escher, who lived in Mazomanie. The church was struck by lightning in 1862 and burned. It was not rebuilt. Some years later the Baptist Church in Mt. Vernon was built. Adam and his family became charter members of the Baptist Church and were buried in the Mt. Vernon Cemetery.

The family scattered to different states, but William Lust eventually purchased the original Lust Homestead. He married Pauline Hankel and

to this union 13 children were born. Five of the children died with diphtheria and are buried in the Mt. Vernon Cemetery. William's wife died during child birth when their daughter, Hattie Lust (Schettler) was born. Three years later William married Luella Jones. William was an avid reader and was well educated. He helped build the first school in Mt. Vernon and served on the school board. His eight children graduated from Mt. Vernon School, but had to walk to Black Earth to receive their diplomas. William passed away in 1918. The farm was then divided.

William and Pauline's surviving children were, Lena (August Klute), Lydia (Robert Davis), Richard (Annie), Oscar, Louise (Emil Koch), Pauline (Sidney Foye), Alva (Nellie Beard), Hattie (John Schettler). From his second marriage, William and Luella's two children were Adam (Emma Baker) and Roy (Margaret Wergler). Adam and Emma Lust have two children, Leslie and his wife Kathy who reside in Wisconsin Rapids, and Cathy and her husband Bill Bruegger who live in Verona. Roy and Margaret Lust have two children, Shirley Sonstebly of Verona, and Roger and his wife Shirley of New Glarus.

### **THE ROY LUST FAMILY**

Roy Lust was born on January 15, 1909, to Luella and William Lust on their farm in Mt. Vernon. His mother worked at the Mt. Vernon telephone switchboard for many years.

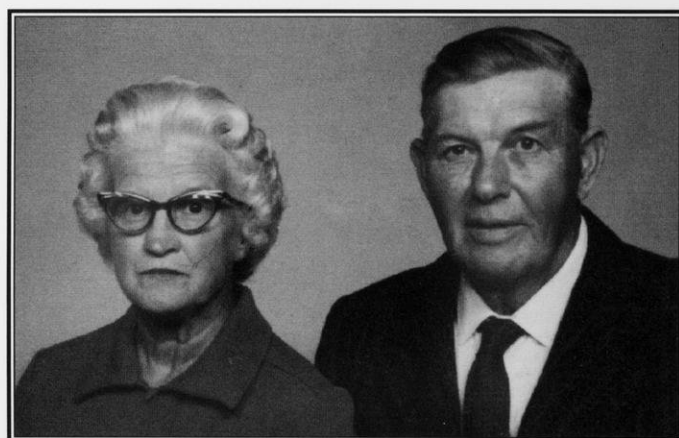
*Below: Alton Lust with his dump trucks in 1945.*



Roy married Margaret Wurgler on May 31, 1934. Roy and Margaret farmed on the homestead farm for forty years. If any of the neighbors ever needed help, Roy was there to help them. Margaret would get up early every morning to get the cows in from the back forty. The neighbors could hear her yodel all the way back through the woods. Roy and Margaret have two children, Shirley (Sonstebly) and Roger (Shirley Best).

Roy passed away on June 6, 1974. Margaret now lives in Mt. Horeb. She spends her time traveling and making quilts.

*Below: Roy and Margaret Lust.*



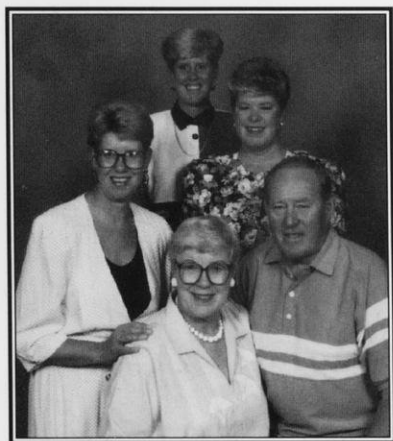
### **THE LEONARD MARTY FAMILY**

Leonard Marty was born on a farm near Pine Bluff, Wisconsin, on December 18, 1924, the last of seven children of the late Leonard and Caroline (Brink) Marty. In 1925, the family moved to what is known as the Marty farm, located south of Mt. Vernon. Some years later, the family moved to the Belleville area, but returned 4 years later to Mt. Vernon.

Leonard Marty Jr. attended the Belleville schools and the Mt. Horeb High School, graduating from Mt. Horeb High School in 1942. After returning from service in the Marine Corp in 1946,

Leonard became engaged to Audrey Westby. They were married on June 28, 1947, in the Zwingli Church, Mt. Vernon. Three children were blessed to the marriage, Cheryl ( Ron Schneider), Kathy (Ed Sies), and Patricia (Gary Best). The Martys now have six grandchildren, Staci and Todd Schneider, Nathan and Jon Patrick Sies, and Amanda and Justin Best.

The Martys owned and operated "Marty's Bar," the corner bar in Mt. Vernon for a number of years. Later, they were both employed by the State of Wisconsin, retiring from the state after over 20 years of service. They now reside in Belleville, WI. The Martys continue to volunteer much of their time to the village of Mt. Vernon, through ball games, celebrations, and church activities.



Left:  
*The Leonard Marty family, Leonard, Audrey, Kathy, Patricia and Cheryl.*

The Marty's son Miner (Mike) moved to Mt. Vernon with his mother and sister Flora. Miner married Elzira Bonner in 1922. She grew up on a farm in Pine Bluff, Wisconsin. Miner owned and operated the blacksmith shop in Mt. Vernon until 1944. At which time he began working at the Gisholt Machine Company in Madison, and worked there until his retirement. Elzira and Miner Marty lived in Mt. Vernon in the home presently occupied by Buddy and Chris Hynek. Miner passed away in 1975 and Elzira in 1991. The Martys have two sons, Medford and Lyle, who reside in Madison, and three daughters, Marion, who lives in Madison, Arlene who lives in Byron, IL., and Arliss who resides in Belleville, Wisconsin.



Left:  
*Susan "Grandma" Marty.  
 -Courtesy of John Heimann.*

## THE MATHAIS MARTY FAMILY

Mathais and Susanna Marty moved to the Mt. Vernon area from Arpin, WI. They lived on the Donald Rock farm. After Mathais died in 1915, Susanna bought a home in Mt. Vernon and resided in the community until her death in 1950. The home is presently occupied by Stanley and Candy Brown. Mathais and Susanna raised six daughters, Susan (Amos Frye), Rose (Paul Genthe), Beth (H. G. Marty), Marie (Fred Haldiman), Flora (Dewey Way), and five sons, Matt, Warner, Albert, John and Miner. The Marty family had a total of 16 relatives in uniform during World War II, including 11 grandsons, two granddaughters, and four husbands of grand daughters. "Grandma" was very proud of all of her family members who served. She served the community as a mid-wife and was referred to as "Grandma Marty" throughout the area.

## THE HENRY MOE FAMILY

Henry Moe came to the Mt. Vernon area from Boyceville, WI. He met and married Alma Wittwer, the daughter of Sam and Elizabeth Wittwer. Henry and Alma moved to her family's farm in Springdale. Henry and Alma were dairy farmers and they delivered their milk to the Mt. Vernon cheese factory. They raised five children, Virginia (Wells), Gloria (Hustad), Delma (Baumgartner), Lavern "Buddy", and Donny. In 1934, their home on the farm burnt down, and the family moved to Mt. Vernon for a time. Delma Moe Baumgartner has childhood memories of the fire. She remembers her favorite teacher, Jane Berge, giving her a dress to wear, and excusing her from school for a week due to the trauma of the fire.

Henry Moe died in 1984. Alma now resides in Verona. She has many fond memories of Mt. Vernon and her many friends there.





Above: *Della Way, Ruth Guyer and Alma Moe in 1996.*  
*-Courtesy of Ruth Guyer.*



Left:  
*Arthur Moore between his daughters, Bernice Moore and Florence Andrews. Joan and Steve Andrews are in front. -Courtesy of Jerry Gilden.*

## THE ARTHUR MOORE FAMILY

Arthur Moore and his brother Bert Moore grew up in Primrose township. Their parents, Franklin and Carrie Moore, bought a house in Mt. Vernon and moved there in 1912. A few years later Arthur Moore and his young wife moved to her parents farm, the Klute farm in Springdale. They had two children, Bernice and Florence. Arthur's wife died, leaving Bernice and her sister, Florence, who was then nine months old. The Klutes cared for their grand-daughter Florence until she was seven years old, and Bernice stayed on the farm with her father. One year later, Arthur's father, Franklin Moore died suddenly. Arthur then had to quit farming and Arthur and his daughter Bernice moved back to Mt. Vernon to live with and help his mother. Florence returned to live with her father, Arthur, and her sister, Bernice, when she was seven years old.

Arthur Moore had a team of horses and a dray wagon. He hauled freight from Mt. Horeb to

Koch's store in Mt. Vernon. There were no trucks at that time. He was also a member of a threshing crew. Since he had a team of horses, he was also a road patrolman in Springdale. Arthur Moore then bought out Ferdinand Koch, who was a partner with his brother, Fred Koch, in the mill business. Arthur and his daughters lived in the second story of the house now owned by Herbert Hankel. They lived there for nine years. In 1935, they moved back to their original house in Mt. Vernon. This was where Arthur Moore lived for the rest of his life.

Florence Moore taught school and married Phillip Andrews. They moved to the Klute farm owned by Arthur Moore. They had two children, Steve, who lives in Mt. Horeb, and Joan, who lives in Green Bay. Phillip Andrews died in 1967 and Florence died in 1975.

Bernice Moore was a piano teacher, and the pianist and choir director for the Mt. Vernon Zwingli U.C.C. for many years. She also worked for 25 years for the Mt. Vernon Telephone Co. on the switch board. Bernice sold the house in Mt. Vernon in 1978 and moved to Verona where she now lives. She has many fond memories of Mt. Vernon.

## THE FRANK MOORE FAMILY

Among the early settlers in Mt. Vernon were Frank and Mary Moore. They were both born in 1865, the year that President Abraham Lincoln was shot, and they died in 1958. Frank's parents, George Moore and Anna Kelly Moore, had homesteaded on a farm in Primrose Township. It was said that George had walked all the way to Mineral Point to file his claim. It was on this farm where Frank and Mary began their married life in 1889. They exchanged their wedding vows in the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church with a Reverend Lincoln officiating. Frank had helped to build the church, and Mary was the organist. They were the first couple ever to be married in that church. The great-great-grandson of George Moore, Gregory Stamm still owns and operates the farm.

In 1900, Mary Moore had heard of the telephone and told her husband that she would like one so that she could talk to her sisters on the phone. At that time, the telephone industry was in its infancy and there were no telephones in the area. So Frank went to Madison Business College, and the seed planted by his wife began to



Above: *The Frank Moore family. Back row: Frank, Corella & Mabel Moore. Right: Mary & Geneva Moore. Center: Viola Moore. -Courtesy of Joyce Everson.*

Above: *Joyce Lillesand Everson. Daughter of Viola Moore.*

Left: *Frank and Mary Moore. -Courtesy of Joyce Everson.*

Below: *The home of Frank & Mary Moore, circa 1905. Once the location of the telephone "central." -Courtesy of Joyce Everson.*



germinate. Area farmers and businessmen became enthusiastic about the idea of the telephone, and funds were contributed to form a telephone company.

On March 9, 1901, the Mt. Vernon Telephone Company was formed at the William Moore home near Mt. Vernon. The first officers were: John Miller, president; Adam Davidson, vice-president; Frank Moore, secretary, and Thomas Davidson, treasurer. Frank and his brother, Bill Moore, had already installed five telephones and strung the telephone wires along the fence posts because there were no telephone poles. Then the Moore brothers, along with Adam and Thomas Davidson, began extending the telephone service to Verona, Mt. Horeb and, later, to New Glarus. At first, the switch board was in the Koch Brothers General Merchandise Store in Mt. Vernon. A year later, a 25-line switch board was installed in Verona as well as Mt. Vernon.

In 1904, Frank and Mary Moore built a home in Mt. Vernon at the corner of Highway 92 and the Mt. Vernon Forest of Fame park. The family moved to Mt. Vernon with their five young daughters, Mabel (Stamn), Corella (Nadler, Henderson), Geneva (Ott), Viola (Lillesand) and Marie (Fjelstad). A switch board was installed in a special room at the back of the house and phone "central" was moved to their home. As the girls grew up, they each learned to operate the switch board and had to take turns tending central.

Frank Moore served as president of the telephone company for many years and was the manager for 25 years as well. He also was postmaster of the Mt. Vernon Post Office. Moores' daughter, Viola, recalled celebrating her fifth birthday on September 6, 1901, with a birthday party while they were still on the farm. The bells on the top of the little square telephone began to jingle, and her Mother answered the phone. She returned with the news that President McKinley had been shot. In those days, information was passed from one party line to the next so it took some time to pass information along.

Frank and Mary were fun and remarkable people. Frank was still breaking colts in his 60's and dancing the Irish jig in his 80's, a heritage learned from his Irish mother. He owned threshing equipment and took it from farm to farm during harvest time. And, in 1908, he owned the first automobile in Mt. Vernon.

Mary, whose christening name was Maria Sofia Blumberg Knutson, was born in Oslo,

Norway, and came to this country when she was three years old. On the way over, she climbed out of the porthole of the ship, and a ship steward just barely caught her by her petticoats. Her parents farmed outside of Mt. Vernon and changed their name from Knutson to Boe because there were so many Knutsons that their mail would get mixed up. Mary's Godfather was Lord Blumberg, a nephew to the King of Sweden, hence her middle name. The Boes, Mary's parents, moved to Mt. Vernon from the farm. Frank and Mary raised five daughters, and after Mary's sister died, they added two nieces to their family. At age 70, Mary was still diving off the diving board. Both of the Moores lived to be over 90 years old and stayed in their home until death.

### **THE JOHN MORGAN FAMILY**

John and Debbie Morgan moved to Mt. Vernon thirteen years ago. They moved into the home that was once a location of the telephone company switchboard. They appreciate owning an older home with lots of room. John is employed at the Community Herald newspaper in Monona, and Debbie works at Webcrafters, Inc. in Madison. The Morgans have three children, Justina, age 21, Brook, age 16, and a son, Jessie, who is 13. John's mother, Margaret Morgan also lives with the family.

### **THE BOB ONSAGER FAMILY**

The Bob and Vera Onsager family has often been referred to as "the traveling family". Over the years, Bob would get "the urge" to travel, and the family would get in the car and go. In 1970, the Onsagers moved to Mt. Vernon, WI, from Mississippi. Bob and Vera have six children, which was a car full. The children who still live in the Mt. Vernon area are, Debbie (Gilden), Scott and his wife Kelly, and Randy. The children who have inherited their father's urge to travel are, John, Renee and Kim, and their families.

Vera thinks that she and Bob will stay in Mt. Vernon, unless of course Bob gets another "urge". Of course, this time, if the family did move, it would mean instead of only 8 in the car, there would have to be 32. They would have to take all of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren too! Bob is also known for his great accordion playing.



## THE JOHN RILEY FAMILY

John Riley and his wife, Florence, moved to Mt. Vernon in the late 1950s. They built a new house on Ben Franklin Street in 1964, adjacent to the property once owned by Florence's mother and father, Frank and Mary Way. John and Florence had two children. Kathleen (Sibernagel) lives in Rhinelander, WI, and has a daughter, Geneice. John Riley III lives in Riley, WI, and has two sons, Joshua and Justin.

Florence worked for the Ohio Medical for three years, and for the State Department of Transportation for 34 years. She taught Sunday school for 11 years, and served on the Zwingli church council for 6 years. When she was a child growing up in Mt. Vernon, she was active in the Zwingli youth group. Florence died in 1994.

John Riley is a native of Riley, Wisconsin. He worked for Gabelt Construction, then for Hammersley Construction as a heavy equipment operator. He then worked at U.W. Hospital and Clinics as a maintenance mechanic until retirement. His mother, Tressa Riley, still watches over John, and never forgets to bake him a birthday cake every December 25th.

Each year, on July 4th in Mt. Vernon when the annual chicken barbecue is in full swing, John is always there to help out. He more than fills his role as "Johnny on the Spot". When you visit John at his home, it becomes obvious that his hobby is bird watching. Birds galore are at his feeders, and his bluebird houses are scattered around the Mt. Vernon area. His two grandsons, Justin and Joshua are the seventh generation of Rileys in Springdale township. As you leave John's house, you can see the lighted cross on the Zwingli U.C.C., the light never goes out.



Right:  
*John and  
Florence  
Riley.*

## THE BILL RYAN FAMILY

Bill and Vi Ryan, along with their four children, Sherry, Rick, Vickie and Jim, came to Mt. Vernon in 1953 with the hopes and dreams of finding a small community in which to raise their family. Bill's occupation was that of a cross-country semi-driver. During his career he was awarded with honor from the Million Mile Club, for his accident free miles. His wife, Vi, was a homemaker, and the entire family found the town's people of Mt. Vernon to be wonderful neighbors.

The family soon became involved in many Mt. Vernon activities. Youth group and other clubs kept the kids busy and happy. In 1964, they built their home in which they still reside, across from the Forest of Fame Park. Bill Ryan was president of the Park Board from 1971 thru 1975.



Right:  
*The Onsager family  
at Renee's wedding in  
1984. From left: John,  
Kim, Jim Sorg, Renee,  
Vera, Robert, Debbie,  
Scott and Randy.*

Their son, Jim was president from 1977 thru 1980, and their other son, Rick served as president in 1982. Vi Ryan continues to act as secretary for the Park Board, having been nominated for the position in 1982. The family has spent many hours in the maintenance of the park, and are also involved with other aspects of community life. They feel that their lives have been greatly enriched having chosen Mt. Vernon as their hometown.

### **THE ADOLPH SCHMID FAMILY**

The year was approximately 1890, when Adolph Schmid and Elizabeth Harry came separately to this country from the Canton of Bern, Switzerland. They met one another in the New Glarus, Wisconsin area. They were married in the New Glarus church on January 14, 1893.

For a number of years, Adolph worked in several of the cheese factories near New Glarus and Mt. Vernon. In 1912, Adolph and Elizabeth bought a farm on Highway G, between Mt. Vernon and Verona. Adolph built all new buildings on this farm, and then he rented it to their son, Adolph Jr.. The farm was later rented to their second son, William. Adolph went back to the business of making cheese in a factory close to Mt. Vernon. Before 1914, Adolph Schmid was instrumental in establishing the Swiss Reform congregation in Mt. Vernon. Then, in 1914, he directed the building of the Swiss Reform church in Mt. Vernon. It later became the Zwingli United Church of Christ.

In 1928, Adolph and Elizabeth moved to Mt. Vernon, buying a house from Art Swenson. It is now owned by William and Sharon Way. Adolph raised chickens and had an egg route in Madison. He was also caretaker of the Mt. Vernon cemetery, and made needed repairs to some of the older monuments there. Adolph could often be seen driving around town in his Model T Ford, with his corn cob pipe bobbing up and down. Elizabeth was affectionately known in the Mt. Vernon area as "Aunt Lizzie". Adolph died in 1940, but Elizabeth continued to reside in Mt. Vernon until the late 1940s when she moved to Verona. She died at the age of 96. Today, the Verona Legion V.F.W. post is named for one of the Schmid's grandsons, Lt. Howard Schmid, a fighter plane pilot, who was killed in World War II.

### **LIBBY & HEIDI SHERWOOD FAMILY**

Libby Sherwood lives in the property on the corner of Washington and Davis streets in Mt. Vernon. In 1897, the property was purchased by Lars and Lena Kittelson for \$205.00. Some years later, August Koch purchased the property for \$200.00. August and his wife, Clara, built the large two-story brick home on the corner in 1913. Their home was built with oak floors, an open staircase, pocket doors and pillars in the parlor for just the two of them. In 1914, August donated some of the property for the location of the Swiss Reformed Church, which is now the Zwingli U.C.C..

After August Koch died in 1927, Clara sold the portion of the property which includes the present church parking lot to Raymond and Otto Beard for the sum of \$1. In March of 1938, Rodney and Helen Kollath bought the house from Clara Koch, who had remarried. Neil and Patricia Donohue purchased the home in 1968 and later sold it to Walter Gerber.

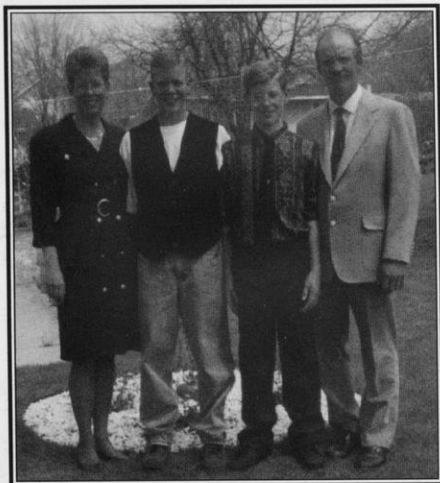
David and Libby Sherwood bought the home in February of 1988, after it had been vacant for one year. It was a Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.) house, and the Sherwoods acquired it by a sealed bid. David and Libby rewired, insulated and restored the home with much care and energy to bring it back to the original grandeur of 1913 when it had been built. Old carpeting was pulled up to reveal the oak flooring and walls were repaired. It is a home which is much appreciated and treasured because of the memories and history it holds within its walls. In 1989, a daughter, Heidi, was born to David and Libby Sherwood, and she is now one of the many joyous children who have grown up in the spacious rooms of this home.

In 1995, Libby became the owner of the home. Her daughter, Heidi, attends kindergarten and the Children's Community School in Mt. Horeb. Since 1987, Libby has worked for the Madison Metropolitan School District as an educational assistant at the Marquette Elementary School. She is active in the Zwingli U.C.C., teaching music in Sunday school and was a co-Sunday school superintendent for three years.

**THE ED SIES FAMILY**

Kathy (Marty) Sies was born and raised in the community of Mt. Vernon, the second daughter of Leonard and Audrey Marty. Kathy married Edward Sies, of Forward, WI, in October of 1974. They lived in Mt. Vernon in the home that is now occupied by the Gary Trainor family. In July of 1988, Kathy and Ed Sies moved to Mt. Horeb. They have two sons, Nathan and Jon. Nathan is presently serving in the U.S. Air Force, and Jon will be entering the Mt. Horeb High School in the fall of 1996.

Ed Sies is employed at Sub Zero Freezer Company, in Madison, and Kathy is employed at the Wisconsin Laborers' District Council of Madison, WI. The family are members of the Mt. Vernon Zwingli U.C.C., where Kathy has taught Sunday school and Vacation Bible school. Ed was caretaker of the Mt. Vernon Park for 10 years, and both Ed and Kathy have served on the Park Board.



Left:  
*The Ed Sies family, from left: Kathy, Nathan, Jon and Ed at Jon's confirmation in 1995.*

and villages. Eventually his talent took him the cities of Milwaukee, Chicago and New York. He became known as the "Hillbilly Auctioneer," and recorded on the "Cuca" record label. Boyd Skuldt and his one man band performed for over 20 years.

Boyd Skuldt also was an inventor and in 1960 he patented the "Ro-Lo Trailer." The trailer was an ingenious camper that folded flat, but when erected had 6.5 ft. headroom. His knowledge of machines once prompted him to convert a hay bailer into a well drilling machine. One local farmer had him drill 3 wells with this invention. And still today, you can never be sure what Boyd will be up to next. Boyd and his wife Nancy have three children, Ben, Janel and Jolene and reside near Mt. Vernon.

*Below: Boyd Skuldt in the early 1950's.*



**THE BOYD SKULDT FAMILY**

Boyd Skuldt was born on a farm in the town of Primrose in 1919 and attended the Dixon school. From 1945 until 1975 he lived all but three years in Mt. Vernon. Boyd was a born musician, although to this day he cannot read a sheet of music. Boyd developed his one man band with a guitar, harmonica and drums. As a youth, Boyd was shy, but he credits the Mt. Vernon school and the Eggiman Tavern for giving his career its start. He played frequently at the Eggiman tavern and later was invited to play in near by towns

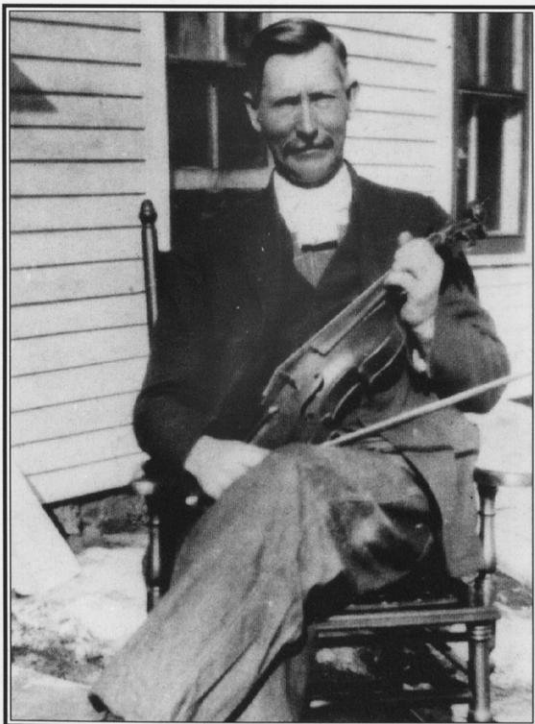


### THE KNUT SPONEM FAMILY

Knut Sponem and Annie Sulland were married in 1898. They farmed near what is now Colby Road, in the town of Primrose. Knut in addition to dairy farming had a "Blue Ribbon" poultry yard. An ad for his business read "Single Comb Orpington eggs for setting at \$2.00 per 15." Knut was also a real estate agent and had an office in Mt. Vernon. In his leisure time, Knut would enter fiddling contests and was known to be one of the best fiddlers in the area. His wife, Annie, served the community as a midwife and she was a seamstress.

The Sponems raised three sons, Trivett, George, and Adolph, as well as three daughters, Jeanette (McGowan), Irene (Hustad) and Della (Diem), all of whom are now deceased. The eldest son, Trivett, operated the farm after Knut died. When Trivett moved from the farm in the 1950's he settled in the village of Mt. Vernon. He was a sales representative for McNess products, as well as the DeKalb Seed Company. Trivett died in 1979 at the age of 80 years. Wayne and Mary Ann Austin now live on a portion of the farm. Mary Ann is the daughter of Della Diem.

Below: *Knut Sponem in 1929.*  
*-Courtesy of Teresa Lalor.*



### THE GORDON STAPELMANN FAMILY

Gordon and Julie Stapelmann and their family of three boys reside in the center of Mt. Vernon across the street from the U.C.C. Church. They purchased their home in 1977. Prior to their occupancy, the house was home to the Kochs, later the Hankels and later the Loseneggers. Gordon's skills in carpentry keep him as busy as he wishes. Cabinet making is what he enjoys the most. Julie has the musical talent in the family. She loves to "tickle the ivories" on the piano. In 1986, she became a registered care giver. There is a beaten path from her house to all of her neighbors' houses. She is a well practiced child care giver, and often takes it upon herself to deliver a meal to someone in need.

Gordon has served on the board of the Zwingli U.C.C. Julie uses her talents to aid the church also. She is the organist for Sunday school and church services. Gordon and Julie's three boys, Adam, Jacob and Luke, offer their community support by shoveling snow and mowing the lawns of those who need some assistance.

Below: *Gordon and Julie Stapelmann with their sons, Adam, Jacob and Luke in 1993.*



### THE JOHN STRAIN FAMILY

John Strain and his wife, Ann, moved to Mt. Vernon in 1954 from Monroe. John was originally from Eagle Grove, Iowa, and Ann Helgesen (Strain) was born in Madison. John and Ann met because John's sister, Maxine, had married Ann's brother, Milton. John and Ann were married in 1937. John Strain was a brick mason and for one

year he managed the American Legion in Monroe and then went back to masonry work. Many years later, Ann worked for General Casualty in Madison. John and Ann had seven children, Michael, Sheila (Eith), Susan (Bovre), Dan, Greg, Jack, and Debbie (Berg). In 1958, the family moved to rural Verona. John died in 1974, and Ann resides in Madison. There are 13 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren.

### **THE TASHER / RHINER FAMILY**

The Sugar River Valley Farm has been home to the Tasher-Rhiner families for five generations. John and Mary (Elmer) Tasher came to America, from Switzerland, in 1858. They settled into their Sugar River Valley homestead farm in 1867. John and Mary had three children, Werner was born in 1866, Eva Ellen was born in 1868, and John, Jr. in 1871. John Tasher, Sr. built the present home on the farm in 1888.

Werner Tasher married Fredrica Schettler in 1893 and they took over the farm. They had four daughters, Mary, born in 1894, Emma, born in 1897, and twins, Iva and Eva, born in 1902. Eva Tasher married John Rhiner in December of 1923. They were the next generation to reside on the Sugar River Valley Farm. They had four children, Edna (Marks), Esther (deceased), Ada (Oimoen), and Gene Rhiner.

Gene Rhiner married Anita Heisig in 1956, in Mt. Horeb, and they then took over the family farming operation. In August 1965, the Rhiners received a certificate at the Wisconsin State Fair honoring their "Century Farm", having been in the family for one hundred years. Gene and Anita Rhiner have four children, Paul, born in 1957, David, born in 1960, Beth in 1964, and Marc in 1968. During the years, the family has been busy with 4-H activities, fairs, track meets, football, basketball, baseball and numerous softball

games. Also, musical concerts and church activities.

Paul Rhiner married Sharon Koch in Las Vegas in 1992. They presently reside in a mobile home on the family farm. Beth Rhiner married William Kolodzinski in the Zwingli UCC in Mt. Vernon in 1989. They reside on a farm close to Union Center, WI. There are 5 grandchildren, Tanya, Samantha, and John Rhiner and Allison and Jacob Kolodzinski. David Rhiner has a farmette in Green County, WI., and Marc Rhiner lives in Mt. Horeb.

### **THE GERALD TRAINOR FAMILY**

Geraldine Erfurth was born in Mt. Vernon in 1939, in the little house on the corner. Gerald Trainor moved to Mt. Vernon in 1949 with his parents, John and Josephine and 12 brothers and sisters. They lived on the Johnson farm. Gerald Trainor married Geraldine Erfurth in 1959. They bought the Beard farmette in 1969 and reside there today. They have four children, Gail (Phil Ruckmen) and his daughter Tanya, Gary and his wife Margaret, Greg and his daughters Brittany and Rebecca, and Guy and his wife Mary and their children Michael and Josh.

Gerald Trainor is a mechanic and devotes most of his time at the Citgo garage with his son, Gary, and brother-in-law, Harland Erfurth. His wife, Geraldine, helps out with the accounts at the Citgo station and also works in food service with the Mt. Horeb School System. In the summer of 1995, they gave their barn a new coat of red paint and it gives the village of Mt. Vernon a fresh look. The barn was originally built in the late 1930's by Otto Beard, who operated a local

Right:

*A Tasher family reunion on the Tasher farm. Circa 1909. -Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*



dairy. He milked four or five cows by hand, cooled the milk with well water and then delivered the milk on foot to the residents of Mt. Vernon. The delivered Guernsey milk cost seven cents a quart.



Above: *The Gerald Trainor family, from left: Geraldine, Gerald, Tanya Rhiner, Phil & Gail Ruckmen, Margaret & Gary, Greg, Brittany & Rebecca, Mary, Michael and Guy.*

**THE JOHN TRAINOR FAMILY**

John J. Trainor was born July 7, 1900, in Blue Mounds township. Josephine Kelliher was born December 3, 1901, in Vermont township. They were married on January 27, 1926, in the St. James Catholic Church in Vermont Township. Together, they had thirteen children. Their son, John P., who married Laurel McGuiggan, is now deceased. The other twelve children are, Russell (Joann Schmitz), Veronica (Joe Jordee), Darleen (Ben Goebler), Daniel (Frances Gerber), Mary (Bob Darrow), Gerald (Geraldine Erfurth), Lawrence, who became a priest, Raymond (DeDe Sutter), Vincent (Karen Czerwonka), Rita

(William Meyer), Vivian (Ron Zurbuchen), and Alice (Nelson Edge).

John and Josephine, and their family lived in and around Mt. Horeb, Blue Mounds, and Ridgeway, and in 1949 they moved to Mt. Vernon. John Trainor died on July 4, 1957. They had 54 grandchildren and 74 great-grandchildren. Josephine died November 29, 1977.

Below: *The John Trainor family, back row left: Veronica Jordee, Russell, John P., Lawrence, Daniel, Raymond, Gerald, Vincent, and Darleen Goebler. Front row left: Vivian Zurbuchen, Rita Meyer, Josephine, Mary Darrow and Alice Edge. -Courtesy of Mary Darrow.*

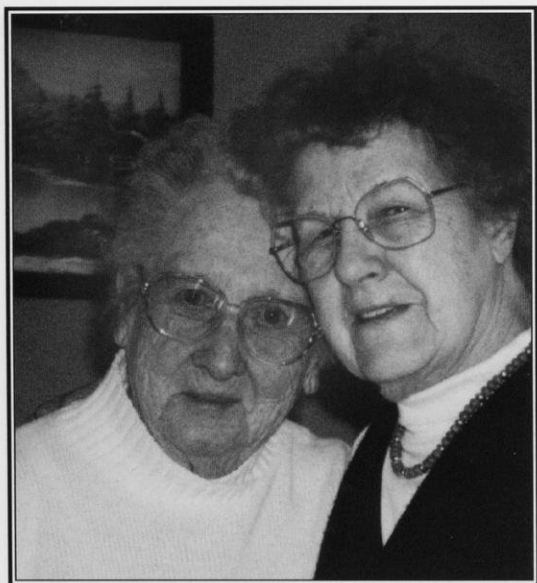




## THE HULETTE & DELLA WAY FAMILY

Della Way has lived all but three years of her life in Mt. Vernon. She was the daughter of Henry and Mary Mitchell. Della's mother, Mary Adiline Hale (Mitchell), was the daughter of Eldred and Mary Jones Hale, early settlers of Primrose Township. Della's Father, Henry Benjamin (Doc) Mitchell came from Wiota, WI. "Doc" Mitchell ran the dance hall, which was originally the creamery building. Whenever there were dances his wife Mary would help serve meals downstairs of the dance hall. Doc and Mary had 2 children, Della and Stella. Stella married Saul Switzky.

In 1922, Della married Hulette Way in Mt. Vernon. Hulette (Happy) Way was a son of Will and Minnie Pierce Way. Hulette Way worked for the highway department. He also made "home-brew" which Della's father would sell at the dance hall. Della and Hulette had nine children, Betty, Bonnie Belle, Velma, Donald, Keith (Pete), Roger, Mary Jenell, Lynn, and Barbara. Doctor Sharpe brought all of the children into the world except Barbara. Hulette passed away in 1964, and Della still lives in the home that was her grandmother's. Her son Donald lives next door in the home that was once the site of the creamery and later the dance hall. Della can remember as a child attending school in the creamery while the new Mt. Vernon school was being built. Now, at 92 years old, Della looks back on her long life, a life that has seen many changes in Mt. Vernon.



Left:  
Della  
Way, on  
left, with  
Ruth  
Guyer in  
1992.

## THE MELVIN WESTBY FAMILY

Melvin and Bernace Westby moved to Mt. Vernon in 1946. They purchased the Mt. Vernon General Store in partnership with Bernace's brother, Bayard Wallace, and his wife, Glen. The store was purchased from Andy and Lucy Nelson.

The Westbys had a son, Ralph, and a daughter, Audrey (Mrs. Leonard Marty). The Wallace's had two sons, Ronald and Robert.

Bayard and Melvin operated a plumbing and heating business in conjunction with the store. They operated the store until they sold it to Sam and Betty Bieri. At that time, the Wallace family returned to the city of Madison, and Melvin and Bernace leased the Mt. Vernon Garage from Rodney Kollath. Melvin continued the plumbing business while operating the service station. The Westby's last business venture in Mt. Vernon was operating the Mt. Vernon Corner Bar. After selling the bar they returned to Madison.

## THE SAMUEL WITTWER FAMILY

Samuel Wittwer and Elizabeth Bieri were born in the canton of Bern, Switzerland, in the 1870s. In the early 1890s they came separately to Green County, Wisconsin. Here they met, and were married on January 20, 1894, in New Glarus, by Reverend John Etter of the New Glarus Swiss Reformed Church. The first year after they were married Samuel made cheese in a Mt. Vernon cheese factory, swiss cheese in summer and limburger in winter. In 1895, they purchased the 120-acre Schettler farm two miles north of Mt. Vernon in Springdale Township, enlarging it later by an additional 40 acres.

On their farm was a small building near the original farmhouse, where he made cheese. Neighbors brought Samuel their milk, and they took home the by-product, whey, in wooden barrels. He built a cement cellar to store the cheese. Their neighbors were Halvor Bang, Ole Lingard, William Lust, Matt Marty, Otto Marquardt, and Carl Hageseth. In February, 1911, these men contracted land from Samuel's property to build the Springdale Center Cheese Factory where he continued making cheese until another cheesemaker was hired.

Before 1900, there was not a rural mail delivery, so they had to pick up their mail in Mt. Vernon at the post office. Perhaps Elizabeth and her daughter, Frieda, would drive the horse and

buggy to take a can of cream to the Mt. Vernon creamery, and on the same trip they would return with their mail from the post office. The economy was generally poor before 1900, milk paid at 50 cents per hundred pounds, hogs at three cents per pound, and cows sold from ten to twenty dollars per head. There were months when they did not have two dollars cash in their pocket.

About 1920, Samuel purchased three acres on the west side of the village of Mt. Vernon from Christ Baumgartner. Samuel and Elizabeth's son, Carl, enjoyed carpentry work and helped them build a five-bedroom house with two bathrooms on these three acres. The home had a generator in the basement to make electricity for lighting. Elizabeth and Samuel moved into the house, and Samuel worked on Springdale and Dane County roads, maintaining them for 24 years until his retirement. He used his team of horses to grade the gravel roads until trucks replaced the horses.

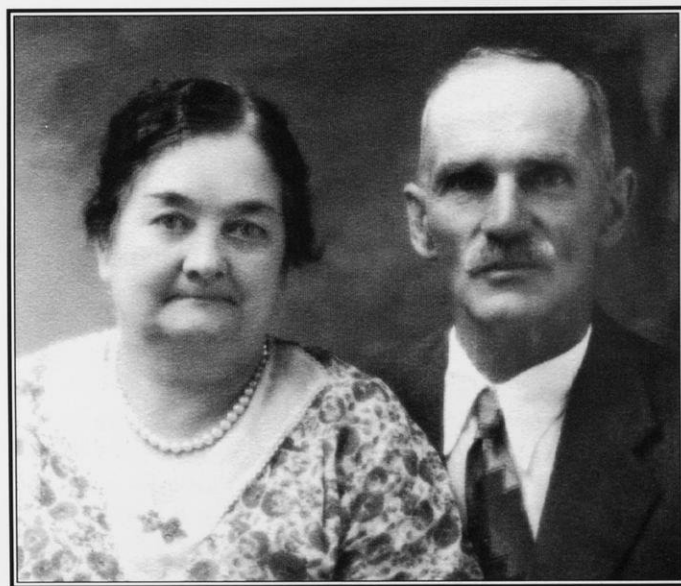
Elizabeth and Samuel's children were, Frieda, born in 1895, Carl, born in 1897, and Alma, born in 1902. They all attended Mt. Vernon School, and the family were members of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. All of their grandchildren were confirmed there also. Samuel was a charter member of the church and one of the original organizers.

Frieda married Adolph Schmid in 1915. They farmed near Eau Claire for a few years, and then settled on a farm in Verona Township. Their children are Evelyn (Frederickson), Robert, Arthur, Raymond, Howard and Pearl (Elver).

In 1918, Carl married Clara Slotten, and they operated Samuel's Springdale farm for many

years. Their children are Dorothy (Schuepp) and Darrell.

Alma married Henry Moe, in 1920, and they also operated Samuel's farm for some years. In 1949, the stable on Samuel's village property was converted to a very comfortable two-story house where Alma and Henry lived in Mt. Vernon. Their children are Delma (Baumgartner), LaVerne, Virginia (Wells), Gloria (Hustad), Beverly (who died in infancy) and Donald. Samuel Wittwer died in his Mt. Vernon home in 1956 at age 83. Elizabeth Wittwer died in 1963 at age 88. Both are buried in the Mt. Vernon Cemetery.



Above: *Elizabeth and Samuel Wittwer, 1939.*  
*-Courtesy of Carl Wittwer.*



Left:

*Street improvements in Mt. Vernon, circa 1910.*  
*Humerous postcard.*  
*-Courtesy of Joyce Everson.*

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## FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS

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We, the people of the town of Mount Vernon, Wisconsin, would like to thank all of the following area businesses and families for your generous support of our 150th Sesquicentennial Celebration. Your contribution has made it possible for us to assemble onto these pages the historic events of this community, and to record the families who have been a part of those events. We hope that you will enjoy reading this book, and that your memories will be sparked by the contents of its pages. We hope too, that you will be able to join us in the celebration festivities in Mount Vernon this October 4th, 5th and 6th, 1996. Thank You!

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Howard Zwiefel

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## HISTORICAL SOCIETY



*Picnic at the Big Spring, in the 1890's. Saul LeVitan is in the foreground, on the left. He was once a peddler, and then a store keeper in New Glarus. He went on to become a banker in Madison, and later a Wisconsin State Treasurer.  
-Courtesy of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.*

This book would not have been possible in its present form were it not for the excellent research facilities of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society. It's scope not only encompasses Mt. Horeb, but also Mt. Vernon, Daleyville, Forward, Elvers Corners, Hendersonville, Klevenville, Peculiar, Pokerville, Pine Bluff, Riley, and a host of other places in the surrounding area.

The society provides educational and entertaining programs, participates in local as well as county historical events, and puts out a quarterly newsletter. Its archives and artifacts include more than 7,000 photographic images of our area, plat

maps dating from 1860 until present, personal writings, clippings, pamphlets, flyers, books, and a host of other items that aid in research and genealogy. The Society also operates a museum which allows the visitors to take a step back into time to view our area's past.

So won't you consider supporting local history by becoming a member of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society? All membership fees, as well as donations of funds or artifacts, are tax deductible. If you have any questions concerning the Society or its activities please call (608) 437-3645.

Please feel free to visit the Historical Society, located on the third floor of the Municipal building, 138 E. Main Street, in Mt Horeb. The hours of operation are: the second and fourth Wednesday of each month, as well as Saturdays during the summer months, 12:30-3:30 p.m.



**YES, I am interested in local history. Please include me as a member of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, Inc.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

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