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 Rettemund. 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.
RECREATION

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


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: Lacon 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 Ankalrud, 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 Tokyo. In 1990, Randy Hanna, Rich Legler, Dave Jelle and Guy Austin, along with four members of the Oregon team, all traveled to Slagharen, 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 medalist round. It was also at Upsala, 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:
-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 Sportmen’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 Lehnherr. 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.

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.

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: Benuince 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.
**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.