

# Our Farming Heritage

*A Self-Guided Tour of Pope Farm Conservancy*



**Tour Length:** *One and a half hours*

*Please note—tour trail covers moderate to steep terrain.*

**Text and photo credits:** *Amy Rosebrough & Stephanie Williams*

## Welcome!

Pope Farm Conservancy preserves the history of farming in Wisconsin, from ancient Native American farming tools to Dust Bowl-era erosion control structures. This self-guided tour will take you on a journey back and forth through time to celebrate our shared agricultural heritage. We thank you for visiting the Conservancy, and hope that you enjoy your tour.

### **Station 1: Wisconsin's First Farmers (AD 1000)**

Start your tour at the first stone and sign circle in the picnic area by the upper parking lot. Native American peoples were the first farmers in Wisconsin. By the time the first Euro-American settlers arrived in Dane County, Native farmers had been raising crops for nearly 2,000 years. The sign labeled “*12,000 Years of Human History*” in the Native American circle features photographs of some of the artifacts picked up here by farmers. The large stone tool shown on the sign may have been a flint hoe. If so, it is the oldest evidence of farming in what is now Pope Farm Conservancy.

The area that would become the Pope Farm Conservancy was once divided into three 80-acre parcels, stretching from what would become Old Sauk Road to Black Hawk Road. The stone fence by the picnic area is the line that once divided the Siebert farm (picnic area) from the Brokenwagen farm (on the other side of the fence).

## **Station 2: Stone Boats and Stone Fences (1860s)**

Now, walk up the hill to the gap in the fence, go through, and turn left. Continue until the trail forks. The hill you just walked down is a glacial moraine—a big pile of stones and rubble dropped here by glaciers during the last ice age. Each winter, frost moves stones up to the surface of the hill. Each spring, before Mr. Siebert and Mr. Brokenwagen could plow, they had to move those stones out of their fields. They—and the farmers who came after them—used the stones they took from the fields to build the stone fence. Very few stone fences from the early days of pioneer farming survive in Wisconsin. This one is over 100 years old. The interpretive sign at this location shows a ‘stone boat’ used by farmers to clear their fields.



Photo by Stephanie Williams

## **Station 3: Heritage Gardens (AD 1000)**

Continue down the hill to the gardens. The heritage garden furthest from Old Sauk Road is a recreation of the kind of garden planted by Native Americans 1,000 years ago. That was a special time in the history of farming in Wisconsin. A new crop—corn—was becoming popular and older crops like marsh elder and maygrass were being forgotten. The farmers of AD 1000 also grew sunflowers, gourds, squash, goosefoot (a relative of quinoa), and tobacco. This garden centers on a small ridged field. Native American farmers of the time sculpted their gardens into parallel ridges and swales, for reasons we still don't clearly understand. The garden closer to Old Sauk Road changes from year to year, but always highlights some aspect of post-Settlement gardening and the global nature of our food supply. Please refer to the signs around it to learn more about this year's theme.

## **Station 4: A Progressive Farmstead/Clearing the Land (1900-1920)**

Turn away from the stone fence and walk along the trail that goes towards the barns (the barns are not on Conservancy property). In the early 1900s, the farm you are standing on was purchased by the Brumm family. It was an exciting time to be a farmer. In 1904, the University of Wisconsin implemented “The Wisconsin Idea”—the idea that the University should improve the lives of Wisconsin's citizens. Farmers were the first to

benefit, as they worked with agricultural researchers to establish Wisconsin's prosperous dairy industry.

The white barn, farmhouse, and buildings were built by the Brumm family in the mid-1910s. The farmstead was built to the standards recommended by agricultural scientists of the time. The dairy barn, farmyard, and other outbuildings were built northeast of the house so that Wisconsin's westerly winds could blow animal odors away from the home.

Art Pope bought the Brumm farmstead in the 1960s and modified the dairy barn to house his prize flock of sheep. Mr. Pope taught at the University and was one of the world's leading sheep researchers. He stayed true to the Wisconsin Idea by helping sheep ranchers all over the world find better ways to feed and care for their sheep. Before his death, he made Pope Farm Conservancy possible to help teach future generations about our farming heritage.

On your right is the forested part of the hill. This part of the farm was never plowed. The scattered rocks represent the natural surface of the moraine. In among the trees you may see a second stone fence and several piles of rocks. These piles are stone dumps—places where farmers were less careful about disposing of the rocks found in their fields. Stone dumps are good indications that a land has been farmed. The oldest known stone dumps in Wisconsin date to the introduction of corn farming nearly 1,000 years ago. These stone dumps are much younger.

### **Station 5: Tenant Farmers (1870s-1900s)**

Keep going into the little valley on the west side of the hill. You are now in the westernmost of the three original 80 acre farms in the Conservancy. In the early 1870s, this farm was purchased by Fritz Elver. Elver didn't farm this land himself. Instead, he rented the farm to a German immigrant named Joachim Goth. Tenant farmers owned their own equipment and animals and raised and sold their own crops. They used some of the money they made to pay their rent, and saved the rest to buy their own farm someday.

The rocky, grassy hillside you see behind the interpretive signs is the site of the Goth family cabin. There isn't much left besides depressions where the cabin and one outbuilding were located. Later farmers used the cabin location as a stone dump, which is why you see so many rocks here today. Mr. Goth raised his family in the little cabin that stood here. He shared it with his wife Sophia, her mother, and ten children! The cabin was probably a busy place. It faced south to catch the sun. A farm lane led from the cabin to Old Sauk Road. Apple trees were planted next to the cabin, and lived long after the cabin was gone.

### **Station 6: Farming Takes Its Toll (1930s)**

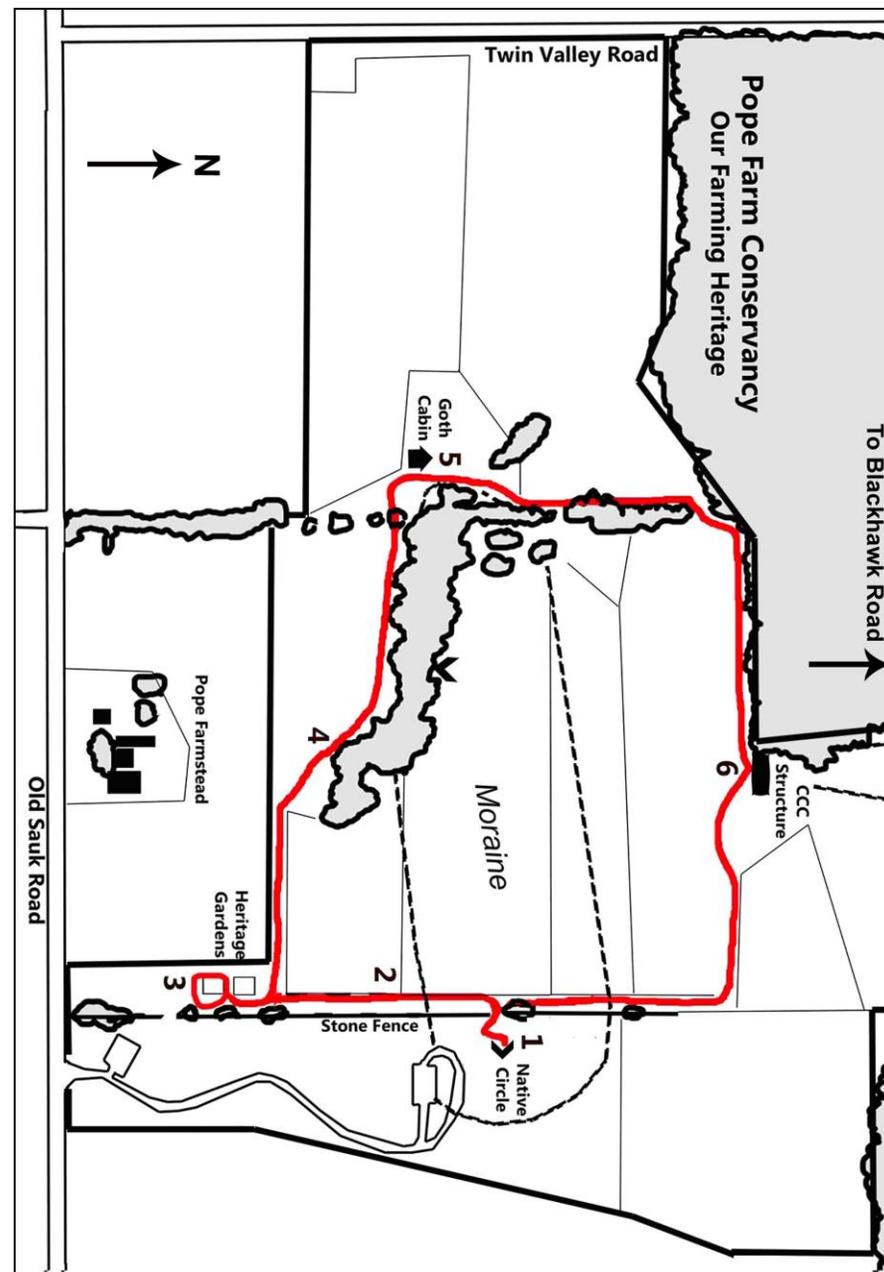
Turn right through the little valley and walk until you reach the forest on the edge of the Conservancy. Turn right, and walk until you see the signs for the CCC culvert. Before this land was farmed, the soil was held in place by the deep roots of prairie plants. When the sod

was broken, soil was exposed to the wind and rain and began to erode. A little side valley that led from the Brumm farm down to Black Earth Creek began to erode into a ravine, carved deeper and deeper by runoff from the moraine.

In 1938 and 1939, members of Soil Conservation Service Camp 11, based out of Mt. Horeb, came to help. They asked the Brumms to stop plowing the places where runoff flowed, leaving the grassy swales you can see today on the moraine to your south. The grass holds the soil in place and slows down the runoff that flows over it. Runoff is funneled into the concrete structure you see here. Water runs down the concrete ramp into a 'stilling pool' that slows it down even more. Any water that makes it all the way to the mouth of the ravine passes through a second erosion control structure.

### Thank You for Taking This Tour!

The Pope Farm Conservancy exists to help people learn about agriculture and our land. We are fortunate that it preserves so much of Wisconsin's farming history. Thank you for visiting, and we hope you come again!



For more information, please continue to visit:

[www.popefarmconservancy.org](http://www.popefarmconservancy.org)