

NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF
**POPE FARM
CONSERVANCY**

Volume 4, Issue 1

PRESERVING THE LAND AND ITS STORIES

BLUEBIRD TRAIL
MARKS A MILESTONE
— AT —
**POPE FARM
CONSERVANCY**



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

A New School Is Coming

BY MEL POPE

On November 6th, 2018, the referendum to add a new school adjacent to Pope Farm Conservancy passed overwhelmingly. This is great news for all of us. In 2006, the adjacent 40 acres was sold by the Town of Middleton to the Middleton Cross Plains Area School District. The Town, the Pope Family, and the School District negotiated the sale of the property. The fit is excellent because the Master Plan of the Conservancy centers on educating grade school students. The proposed facility will be a grade school that will accommodate 525 students. Construction is scheduled to begin next summer (2019), with the opening scheduled for the fall of 2020.



In 2004, the Master Plan for Pope Farm Conservancy was approved by the Town of Middleton. After many experts determined what the land had to offer, it became apparent that Pope Farm Conservancy was a gold mine for education. Today, PFC boasts over 20 different vegetative plots, lessons in German immigration, Native American history, geology (including three recessional moraines and three different watersheds), the Erosion Story, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. It is also home to a Native American garden, a historic Stone Fence, bluebird trails and 40 interpretive signs. In 2020, students from the new school will have access to all these educational opportunities right outside their door. Fabulous!

The Friends have been working hard creating lesson plans for all the Conservancy's features, and have put together self-guided tour pamphlets that can be used by the teachers (and public) in guiding their students through these valuable stories. In addition, the Friends are putting more extensive lesson plans together that can be accessed through hand-held devices within the Conservancy itself. The German Immigration story is complete, and we are now working on the "History of the Land" as the next subject. Several more of these stories will be added over time. These interactive topics will also have more in-depth research available on our website so that teachers will be able to access all of our research about all the various stories so they can feel comfortable teaching in the Conservancy.

The FOPFC Education team already helps with the MCPASD 4th graders on their annual field trips. In the future, the team will be looking at the possibility of aiding the teachers at the new school when they visit the Conservancy. We have a number of retired teachers and FOPFC members who have excellent experience working with education. At some point we might be able to help the students learn the stories of the land. It is an exciting time, and Pope Farm Conservancy will become a wonderland to many young inquisitive minds.

Mel Pope, Chairman
Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy

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FOPFC Mission

Our mission is to contribute to the enrichment of Pope Farm Conservancy as a community and educational asset. We strive to protect and preserve the balance of the conservancy's unique natural, agricultural and historical features and volunteer as stewards to promote our passive conservancy.

Purposes

- Advance and facilitate educational opportunities and interpretive programming in the Pope Farm Conservancy for students and the general public.
- Preserve the balance of wildlife habitat, historic, geologic, agricultural, environmental, and scenic features of the Pope Farm Conservancy.
- Protect natural landscapes and grass trails, wildlife and their habitat, and the general public's tranquil enjoyment of the Pope Farm Conservancy as a passive conservancy free from commercial activity; motorized vehicles and bicycles; dogs; and organized sports that require athletic fields or open space.
- Through volunteer activities, support the Town of Middleton in the maintenance, improvement and general enrichment of the Pope Farm Conservancy as an educational and community asset.

Contact Us

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GERMAN IMMIGRANTS

New videos tell the story of a group of German immigrants from the Mecklenburg, Germany region who came to America and ultimately, settled in the Town of Middleton in the 1850s and 1860s.



MONARCHS OF POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

If you visited the conservancy during mid-to-late September this past summer, you may have noticed a bit of an unusual uptick in the number of monarchs feeding on asters and other wildflowers.



BLUEBIRD TRAIL REACHES A MILESTONE

This year marks a special milestone for Pope Farm Conservancy's popular bluebird trail. In 2018, after 11 breeding seasons, slightly more than 1,000 birds have fledged from the conservancy's nest boxes.

Donate to Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy

I would like to make a tax-deductible donation at the level of:

- Bluebird Trail..... \$50
- Rock Wall\$100
- Oak Savannah\$250
- Capital View\$500
- Other

Donor Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

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Please mail this form and your check (payable to FOPFC) to:
FOPFC, 10333 Blackhawk Rd., Middleton, WI 53526

BRINGING LOST HISTORY TO LIFE

GERMAN IMMIGRATION AND
THE POPE FARM CONSERVANCY



*Top photo: Jürgen (John) Goth (left) and his wife Maria Grandt
Bottom photo : Left to right: Carl Goth, Sophia Maria (Joachim Goth's wife),
Joachim (James) Goth, Hanne Sophie Goth (mother of Carl and Joachim)*





*Mae Goth Hartwig,
descendant of the
Goth Family.*

Early photos help tell the stories of German immigrants who came to Wisconsin. The FOPFC Education Team has developed an interactive video tour that allows visitors to access the stories as they walk the conservancy.

<https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/plan-your-visit/interactive-tours/>

Photos: Mae Hartwig and the Wisconsin Historical Society

Many new and long-time residents of the Town of Middleton might be surprised to learn that the place they call home has a long-forgotten history. Now, with the help of a resource developed by the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy, people can discover the story of their area's past.

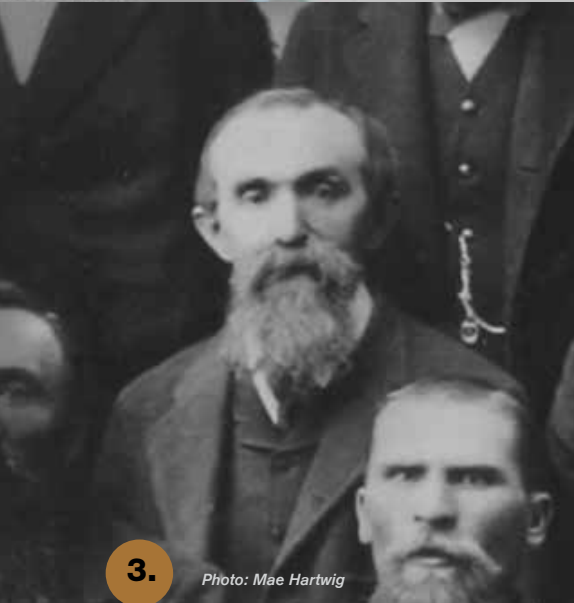
Teaming up with local experts and researchers, the FOPFC Education Team developed a series of interactive tours and videos about the history of the land. The "German Immigration" video series was completed in the fall of 2018 and serves

as the basis for the new interactive tours. Using their smart phones to scan QR codes, visitors can access the videos from the FOPFC website as they walk around the conservancy.

The videos tell the story of a group of German immigrants from the Mecklenburg, Germany region who came to America and ultimately, settled in the Town of Middleton in the 1850s and 1860s. The topics covered include "Leaving Germany," "Coming to America," "Early German Settlers," "Farming, a Family Affair," "Schools," "Church," "Social Life and

Language," and end with "The Goth Family."

It's in "The Goth Family" video that viewers meet Mae Hartwig, youngest child of Martin Goth and granddaughter of Carl Goth, who settled in the Town of Middleton area. Mae had old family letters written in German that shed light on an important part of the story of the local land settlement. It was Mae's letters and an old cabin site on the conservancy inhabited by her great uncle, great grandmother, and other members of the Goth family, that inspired Mel Pope to contact the



1. Many of the immigrants who settled in the Town of Middleton in the 1950s and 1860s came from a small 15-square-mile rural area between the towns of Hagenow and Ludwigslust in Mecklenburg, Germany.
2. The white church, which still stands on the corner of Pleasant View Road and Old Sauk Road today, was built in 1866 by the First German Evangelical-Lutheran Congregation. For over 50 years, church services, bible school, and all meetings and events were held entirely in German.
3. Carl Goth (pictured above) traveled to Wisconsin from Mecklenburg, Germany in 1857. His uncle, Jürgen Goth, had settled in the Town of Middleton two years earlier and paid for Carl's journey to America.
4. For many German immigrants in the Town of Middleton, church was the center of social life. Special celebrations, church

- holidays, picnics, and choir meetings brought the congregation together.
5. For the new settlers, farming the new land in the Town of Middleton wasn't easy. To cultivate their new land, men cleared big boulders using oxen-drawn carts. Rocks would be piled at the boundary of the field and over time would create a stone fence, like the one at Pope Farm Conservancy today.
6. The First German Evangelical-Lutheran Congregation was founded by Mecklenburg immigrants in 1852. As the congregation grew, they decided to build this little log church in 1954. Each family contributed 2 logs and helped to build the walls.
7. Many of the nineteenth-century German-speaking immigrants left their homeland for economic reasons. Their dream was to have their own land and become financially independent. They chose to settle in Wisconsin because of the affordable land.

UW-Madison Max Kade Institute for help.

"The history of place is often forgotten," said Antje Petty, associate director and educational outreach specialist for the Institute. "Mae's story and her letters are the things we like to preserve and protect." The Max Kade Institute dedicates itself to researching the stories of German-speaking immigrants and their

descendants, preserving personal documents in the German language and sharing resources through publications, community outreach, and educational programming.

Mae allowed the Max Kade researchers to scan, transcribe and translate her family letters, providing a more complete picture of the Goth family's experience and the overall historical immigration from

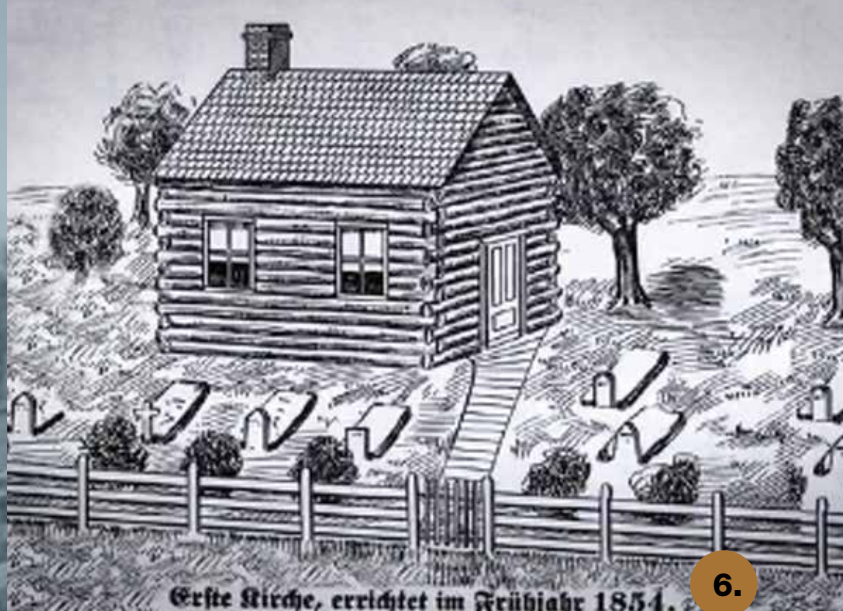
Mecklenburg to the Town of Middleton.

In addition to working with the Goth family materials, the Max Kade staff contributed research and background for the digital immigration story.

"There are many different perspectives, including family and community histories, that together tell the story of a place," said Antje.



5.



6.



7.

Photo: Mae Hartwig



8.

8. In the Town of Middleton, immigrants from Mecklenburg settled among their friends and families. They continued to speak their Mecklenburg-German dialect and kept many of their old-world traditions.
9. In the 1850s, the journey from Mecklenburg to the Town of Middleton was long and strenuous. First, immigrants traveled to a harbor city by horse or wagon, then crossed the Atlantic Ocean on a sailing ship (later a steamboat), then traveled by train or lake schooner from New York to Milwaukee, and finally on to the Town of Middleton via wagon.



9.

Photos: Mae Hartwig and the Wisconsin Historical Society

“The Mecklenburg settlement in the Town of Middleton is a typical example of how the Midwest was settled in the mid-19th century.”

Antje believes that other communities could benefit from the German Immigration project. “History is tied to the landscape. The public education approach taken at Pope Farm Conservancy can serve as a model for other places,” she said.

Doug Normington, a 23-year Town

of Middleton resident and Friends member, served as the project’s video producer and editor. That included working with the State Historical Society to locate and borrow photos to enhance the final version. Doug also edited the eight stories down to two- or three-minute videos.

The new interactive tour is just the beginning of the Education Team’s plans to tell the story of the land,

according to Doug. The goal is to develop more interactive tours that will provide visitors with an educational experience and help to preserve the area’s historic rural characteristics.

“Having lived here a long time myself, these stories are really a forgotten history,” said Doug. “Now when people move to the Town of Middleton, there’s going to be a history for them to explore.”



FEATURE

MOI

BY MIKE MCDOWELL

MONARCHS

AT POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

Though I typically contribute an ornithological article for Pope Farm Conservancy's newsletter, for this issue I decided to write about the iconic Monarch Butterfly. If you visited the conservancy during mid-to-late September this past summer, you may have noticed a bit of an unusual uptick in the number of monarchs feeding on asters and other wildflowers. Perhaps it was just the day I was there, but I was astonished at how many were present. In several places, I counted as many as a dozen or more butterflies on a single flowering plant. Thus, in the context of protecting native flora and fauna, it gave me a sense of rare hope and I'll share with you why.

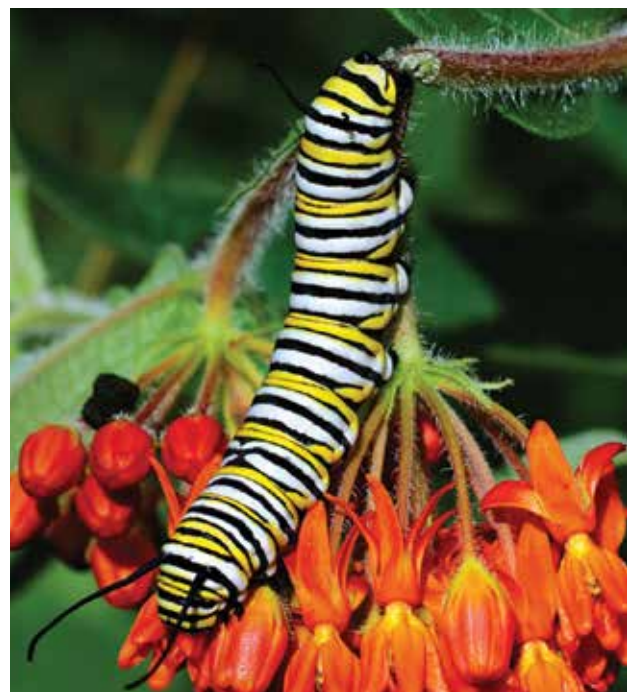
The story is not unlike other vanishing species. Over the past 20 years, Monarch Butterflies have declined around 90% on their migratory wintering grounds in Mexico, with an astonishing 15% drop in just the past year. One way to visualize this decline is to imagine it in terms of football fields. If we could group all the monarchs onto a football field, in the 1990s they would have filled almost 40 fields. Today it's down to just one.

The reason for the drastic population drop is incredibly complex. In addition to a multitude of socio-economic pressures, there's habitat loss and fragmentation, deforestation in Mexico, pesticides, and weather extremes like droughts and floods. In fact, in 2002 it was estimated just one severe weather event killed over 200 million monarchs in the mountains of central Mexico.

Milkweed is the only host plant monarch caterpillars eat and I know over the past several years people have been encouraged to plant more of it on their properties. Seeing so many monarchs this past summer gave me pause to think that perhaps many of us have, in some small

way, contributed to this butterfly's summer resurgence. However, it's too early to say for sure because there are potentially other factors in play, like an above average milkweed crop from a particularly good summer growing season. To be sure, southern Wisconsin is a very small data point.

Can we save the Monarch Butterfly from extinction? I certainly hope so, but it will take more than planting milkweed. Conservation efforts are just as multifaceted as the declines and if we're going to preserve this species for future generations of people to admire, we'll want to take advantage of every opportunity we can. Monarchs' sharp decline may be a harbinger of widespread environmental disruption, but to see so many at Pope Farm Conservancy gave me hope it's not too late.



A Monarch caterpillar. Milkweed is the only host plant Monarch caterpillars eat.

Photos by Mike McDowell

BLUEBIRD TRAIL A MILESTONE

AT POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

The Pope Farm Conservancy's popular bluebird trail marked a special milestone last year. In 2018, after 11 breeding seasons, slightly more than 1,000 birds had fledged from the conservancy's nest boxes.

When the idea for a bluebird trail at Pope Farm was first proposed, long-time Friends volunteers Curt and Arlys Caslavka agreed to take on the project. The Town of Middleton provided funding to purchase the rough cedar wood used to build the boxes, as well as the conduit piping for the poles. Curt and Arlys subsequently built 20 boxes and in early spring 2008, placed them along

the walking trails at Pope Farm.

The couple have maintained the bluebird houses ever since. During breeding season, which typically starts in early April and can run through early August, they monitor the boxes weekly to check the young birds' progress and sort out any problems. English sparrows, ants and other insects can pose a threat and need to be removed. To deter raccoon predation, Curt designed low-cost guards made from stovepipe and placed them beneath each nesting box.

To date, three bird species have successfully nested in the houses—bluebirds, tree swallows and house wrens.

Of the 1,000-plus fledges that have taken place since 2008, about 60% are bluebirds, 35% tree swallows and 5% house wrens. The information gathered during each season includes identification of the species, number of eggs laid, number of eggs hatched, and number of young birds that actually fledge from the boxes. All of this accumulated information is shared with the Bluebird Society of Wisconsin (BRAW).

"We've enjoyed doing this," says Curt. "People passing by like to ask us what we're doing when we're working on the trail and it's great interacting with them and getting their feedback."



Long time FOPFC members Curt and Arlys Caslavka established the bluebird trail in 2008 and have maintained it ever since.

Photo by Janie Starzewski.

RAIL REACHES



Fall asters and goldenrod surround one of the conservancy's bluebird nesting boxes.

Photo by Janie Starzewski

Photo by Mike McDowell



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