

ERIC DOCKEN FARM

Original patent received from US government to James Babcock in 1852.

1854 William Woodman sold to John Hunter.

The first Hunter house on the farm was built near what is today Hwy 54, between the Harlan Hunter and Eric Docken farms. An old rose bush showed evidence of this old homestead for many years--the roses would come up every spring with sweet smelling blooms until the 1960s. I dug up a root and I still have some of these roses reappearing each spring.

In 1864 John Hunter died. The farm was willed to his son, Thomas. John's widow, Agnes Grant Hunter, and their invalid son, Peter, were to be cared for by Thomas.

In 1881 or soon after, the Hunter home was moved to its present day site. In 1922, after Thomas' death, the farm passed to his children-- Robert and Isabel Hunter. Isabel died in the 1930s.

In 1943 Robert Hunter sold to his sister, May Hunter Docken, her son, John and wife, Betty and May's other son, Donald and his wife, Norma. The old kitchen was torn off of the house.

In 1986 Betty Docken sold the farm to her son, Eric and his wife, Mary Ann.

In 2002, Eric and Mary Ann had the old porch torn off, added a wrap-around porch/deck on the west and south sides, re-sided the house and improved the bathroom.

The Hunter farm was the center for all of the "Clan". Everyone would stay there when they visited. The big front porch was a gathering place in the summer evenings and games of croquet played to the east of the house were grand battles, played with a special set of "Hunter rules", which made for a pretty lively games. At one time, blueberries grew in the hills north of the cultivated land. Isabel was an excellent marksman and frequently went

hunting, bringing back squirrels for supper.

The Hochunk Indians were very friendly with Tom and Agnes. One winter while camping on the front lawn, one of the Hochunk women was about to deliver a baby. Agnes insisted that the mother-to-be come in the house so she could be delivered out of the cold.

"Grandma" House

SMALL HOME ON ERIC DOCKEN FARM

In 1938 a small home with four rooms and a bathroom was built of the eastern side of the lawn from the big house for Thomas and Mable Hunter when they were married.

In 1938, when Thomas and Mable moved to Winona, siblings May Docken, Bob Hunter and later Jack Hunter lived in the house.

Jack and Bob both died there. May lived alone until the 1980s when she went to live with son Bob and finally Jack and Betty.

In 1986 Jack passed away and Betty sold the farm to her son, Eric. She moved into the renovated small home and lived there until her death in 2001. The house is now rental property owned by Laurie-Docken

Eric



Duane and Betty Hunter Home

DUANE AND BETTY HUNTER HOME

Property transfers-

1853-USA to Charles Boyce

1864-Boyce to James Sam(p)son

1903-Sampson to Robert Hunter

1915-Robert Hunter to Walter Hunter

Walter and Jeanette Oliver Hunter had tried homesteading in Lamar, Nebraska around the turn of the century. Lamar was a small town located near the Colorado border. Agnes, the Hunters' eldest daughter, remembered that the homestead was part of a "tree claim". This meant that a certain number of trees needed to be planted and maintained on this land in order to "prove up" on it.

The Hunters returned to Wisconsin in 1902 after unsuccessfully farming their claim for eight years. The women and children had tickets to ride the train. Walter and his three young sons, John, Lucian and William, had to ride in the boxcars with the stock. Walter and Jeanette set up farming on Decorah Prairie across the road from the Thomas and Agnes Hunter farm. (Present day Eric Docken farm)

In 1929, Walter Hunter died and left the farm to Lucian (Toot) and Donald. In 1932, Lucien married Hazel Poss and had two children-Barbara and Duane. Duane married Betty Hendricks in 1900 and after a year living with his parents, the young couple moved to a mobile home. This was located just across the ravine to the east of the farmhouse. In 1967 Duane and Betty bought the Marvin Baardseth house in Skunk Coulee and had it moved on to a site on County AA on the southeast corner of the farm. After raising six children, the Hunters now live alone in their home.



Lucien Hunter/Mark Hunter House

LUCIEN/MARK HUNTER FARM

Charles and Clarinda Boyce purchased this land from the US government in 1853.

In 1864 the Boyces sold the property to James and Kate Samson for \$2,200.

James was reputedly a friend of the great Scots bard, Robert Burns.

In 1902, James died and left the farm to his ten children. One year later, Robert Hunter bought the property for \$6,800.

In 1915 Walter Hunter, son of Thomas Hunter, returned from homesteading in Nebraska and obtained the farm from Robert. The farmhouse at this time was an old, gray, unpainted home with a tiny kitchen, dining room, living room and two bedrooms. Walter and his wife, Jeanette, used one bedroom. John (Jack) Hunter, wife Effie and daughter Maud used the other sleeping room which had its own chimney.

Jack and family later moved west to the farm now owned by his son, Harlan and wife, Verneille.

The second story of the Walter Hunter house was one big room filled with beds. Mamie and Carl Byom and their three children stayed there on their return from Nebraska. John and Florence Hunter also moved in for a year when they, too, came back from Dust Bowl Nebraska in May 1931. There was no insulation in the old house and the teakettle would freeze on cold winter nights.

Agnes Hunter Johnson (Walter's eldest daughter) remembered making a huge kettle of soup every Sunday. The young people of the Prairie liked to gather at the farm. I can remember spending many summer evenings there playing hide and seek with my cousins. In 1929 Walter died leaving the farm to Lucien (Toot) and Donald Hunter. Lucien, Donald and Uncle Adam Oliver lived there for several years. Joe Modahl spent a winter there when he started hauling cream.

Lucien married Hazel Poss in 1932. In 1936 the old house was torn down and a new home was constructed. The family lived in the garage on the other side of their driveway while the new house was being built. Duane and Betty were married in July 1960 and lived with Toot and Hazel for a year until they placed a mobile home on the east side of the ravine.

Toot died in the 1970s and Hazel lived alone until her death in 1995. The farm was bought for her son, Duane. Mark, son of Duane and Betty, purchased the house and a few acres. The house was renovated by Mark who now resides in this lovely home with

his wife and two daughters.

FRANCIS AND JOYCE GUTHRIE HOME

DEC. 8 1853 USA to Charles and Clarinda Boyce

Sept. 20, 1864 Boyce to James Sam(p)son for \$2,200

1902 James Samson dies and wills farm to his children

1905 Sold to Walter and Jeanette Oliver Hunter

1924 Twenty wood lot acres west of Highway 54 are sold to William and May Hunter for \$1,000.

William (Kinner) and May built a small building to live in which later became the chicken coop.

Although the land was officially sold in 1929, Kinner and May actually moved on to the property around 1922 after a failed attempt at homesteading in Custer County, Montana. Kinner and John Davidson built a house with a basement and four rooms. The house had two bedrooms upstairs and a kitchen, living room and screened porch downstairs. There was also a lean-to entrance off the kitchen.

My brother Jack and I remember the time we spent with my dad blasting tree stumps as he cleared fields around the home place and over the hill to the north. Harlan Hunter and I played cowboys and Indians in the woods. Walks to Decorah's Peak and the Mound were frequent occurrences. With cows and horses grazing in the woods the forest was free of underbrush. There were no trees growing on the hillsides close to the Mound and the Peak. Picking raspberries and blackberries were common summer tasks.

In 1931 our house burned to the ground. The fire probably started from a small stove in the new kitchen that my father was adding on to the house. After a winter and spring living first with Uncle Bob Hunter and then in our tiny garage (we had snow on our beds many winter mornings) a contractor from Blair built the present house where the McMahons live. The new house cost all of \$1,500. The new house did not have electricity or indoor plumbing but we soon had a rain water cistern with a hand pump in the kitchen. Eventually we had water from our well piped to the house by gravity. We were "electrified" around 1939-40.

In 1950 Joyce and her husband, Francis (Sam) Guthrie moved back to Wisconsin from Connecticut. They purchased five acres for \$1.00 from Kinner and May for a building site. Located over the hill to the north from Kinner and May's farm, the acreage was soon the site of our new home. Kinner and Sam cut the majority of the lumber for the house from the woods on the home farm. They dug the basement with a tractor and scraper, The entire house cost \$8,000. We moved in April 1952.

They only changes we have made to the house over the years was an enlargement of the garage to a two car size, another bedroom on the south end of the house and converting the breezeway into a glassed in porch. (Best thing we ever did!)

CONGDON HOME

Eighty Acres Sec. 36, Town of Gale

Original patent--US government to John Moors August 1853.

Ownership (or mortgages) changes several times in the early years: Phillips, Edwards, John Hunter, Alex Arnold, David Cook, Collins, John Davidson, John Y. Davidson.

The old house was built in 1887 and torn down in 1973. Apparently the house was built while in the ownership of John Davidson. It was a very simply built two-story house with a dirt cellar underneath the square part. The kitchen had two doors/window openings and a "lean to" for a summer kitchen. at the back of the kitchen. The floors in the upright part of the house were a single layer wide flooring and when the wind blew hard, it felt like walking on clouds as you walked across the linoleum or rugs.

While under the ownership of John Y. Davidson, one quarter acre was sold (or easement given) to School District #2 in October 1905, to build a schoolhouse. A similar easement was gotten from the neighboring farm to the west (William Davidson) to make a total of one half acre for school purposes.

Bert Congdon bought the farm from William and Katie Willinger in 1921. Mark Willinger had owned the farm since 1916 and raised hogs in addition to cows. It was said he was proud of his pigs so he built his hog houses out near the road.

In 1926 the school district remodeled the schoolhouse putting all windows on the West Side of the building according to state rules. During the 1926-27 school year classes were held in the large dining room of the Congdon house. (Half of the square part of the house). Good water was carried from there at times to the school as needed.

Mildred and Delores moved with their folks to the farm from Mindoro in March 1921 and Darwin was born there in June of that year.

Darwin and Thelma Jean were married in August of 1944 and Bert and Effie moved to Galesville, farming in partnership for awhile. Darwin and Thelma Jean purchased the farm in 1955. Two children, Margaret and Kenneth were raised on the farm. The kitchen was remodeled and the bathroom put in about 1954. The house was heated over the years with wood, hard coal burned in a big stove with isinglass windows and later, fuel oil stoves.

Farmland was purchased from Harry Johnson in 1962. Darwin and Thelma Jean moved off the farm to a rental property for two and half years . Kenneth and Debra took over farming operations in the spring of 1981.

Darwin and Thelma Jean move into their newly built retirement home in October 1983, built on land purchased from Harry Johnson. Darwin died March 2000.

Thelma Congdon

Ken and Deb Congdon Farm

The Congdons came to Decorah Prairie in 1921. Ken and Deb and daughter Kendra are the third and fourth generations to live at the farm. The original eighty acres has expanded to many more. The buildings have changed to meet the needs of a crop operation.

