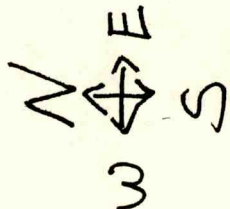
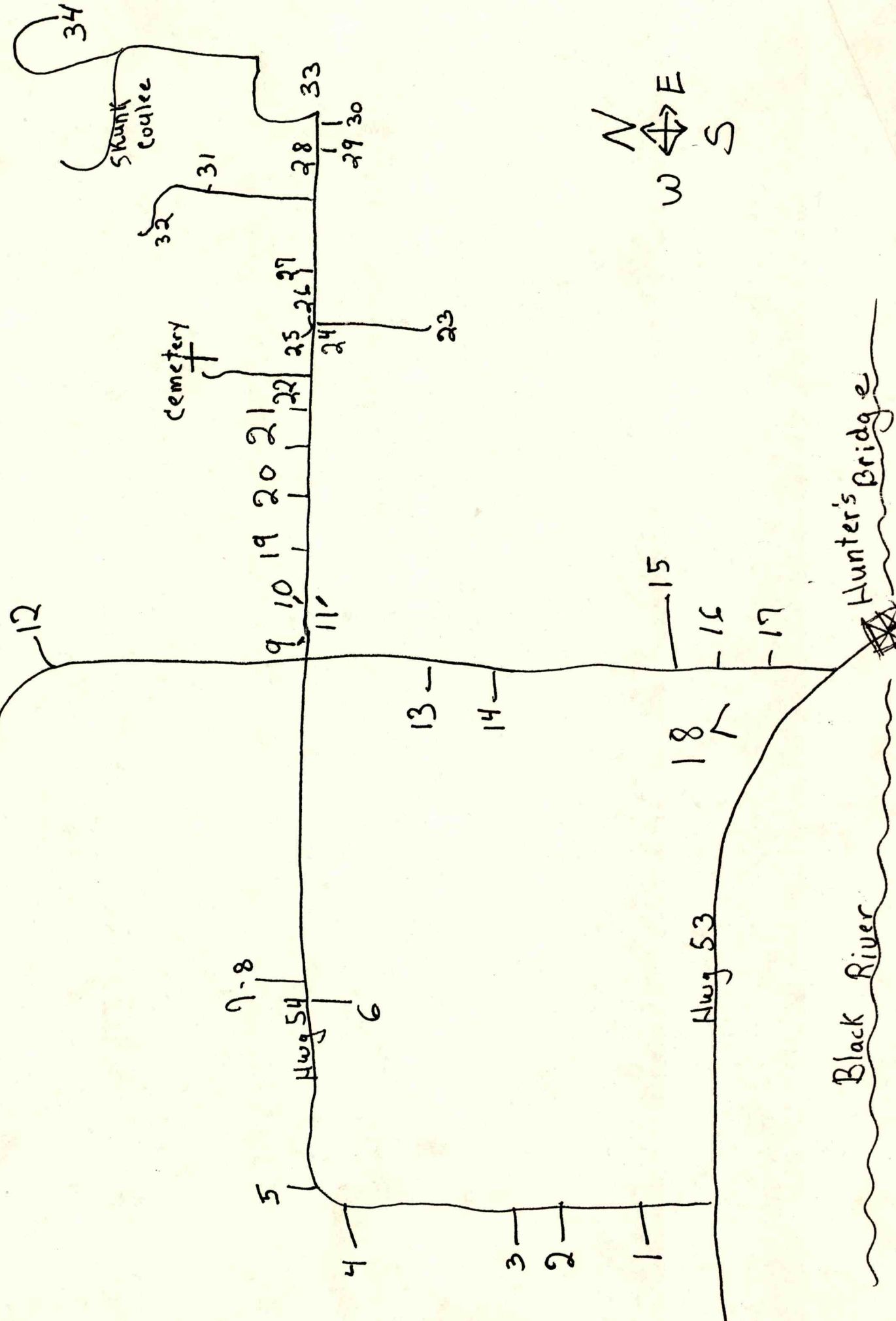


MAP KEY

1. Original Davidson Farm
2. Muller House
3. Hunter/McMahon House
4. Guthrie House
5. John/Harlan Hunter Farm
6. Mark Hunter Farm
7. Eric Docken Farm
8. Docken "Grandma" House
9. Hefner/Aleckson House
10. Hanson Farm
11. Baardseth/Kohlmeyer Farm
12. Lowner Farm
13. Duane Hunter House
14. Old Butman/White Farm
15. Old Hanson Farm
16. McKeeth House
17. Cook House
18. Old Welda Farm/Small Tracts
19. Congdon House
20. Decorah Prairie School/Hjerleid House
21. Ken Congdon Farm
22. Betz/Smith House
23. Larson Farm
24. James Larson House
25. Henthorn House
26. Cook/Prough House
27. Brown/Scott House
28. Old Anton Lee House
29. Hendrickson Farm
30. Scarseth/Abel Farm
31. Stetzer/Gram House
32. Jacobs House
33. Don Docken Farm
34. Hill Farm

Lower Hill



Black River

Hunter's Bridge

Skunk Coulee

Cemetery

Hwy 53

Hwy 54

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DECORAH PRAIRIE

Centuries ago, Indians moved from area to area because of conflicts, government treaties etc. Three bands seem to have made their homes in our general locale – Trempealeau County, Black River valley and Mississippi River. After the coming of settlers there were scattering of encampments. One-Eyed Decorah, a Winnebago Chief, had a village about a mile and a half from Decorah Peak. The battle of the Decorah and Chippewa tribes was thought to be after the war of 1812. Chief Decorah died in 1864. His granddaughter was Princess Marie Nounuka (Marinuka), and is buried at Arctic Springs.

The earliest settlers came to the area in 1853 primarily from Scotland, thus the early name of Scotch Prairie. Early family names were Hunters, Irvines, Dicks, Olivers, Sampsons, Cooks, Grants and Davidsons. They came from coal mining areas of Scotland, some living in Pennsylvania and Maryland before coming here, so "farming" had to be learned. 'They were a genial group and fond of company. Dances amused them often.'

Early Scotsmen organized the Bobby Burns Club in Galesville with an annual program and festivities commemorating his birthday. The Burns Bonspiel now is a carry-over of that event. The sport of "Curling" began in early 1870's on the Black River between teams (rinks) from North Bend and Decora Prairie. Many descendants of those pioneers have enjoyed this winter sport in much improved facilities, and several have been very successful in the competition locally to internationally.

Decora Prairie School District #2 was the oldest documented school in Trempealeau County—1855. The first school was built within the year on the N.W. corner of the present Larson farm. Within the following ten years, enrollments had increased and Grant district # 7 was formed. Decora Prairie built a new building across the road, which is now part of the Hjerleid home. Through the years the building was used for church, funerals, bridal showers, socials, 4-H meetings, card parties, also special school programs and parties. For several years, (in the late 20's into the 30's), Winnebago Indian (Native American) children from their encampment near Hunters Bridge, attended school on the Prairie. Enrollments gradually decreased, busing was available, state requirements changed and the school closed in 1955 – a 100 year span.

A community cemetery was established in 1862 and a part of it contains the graves of Winnebago Indians. Among them is the grave of Chief Tom Thunder. Lorna Betz sang for his funeral in 1949. Indians associated with area people. For many years, they bartered their goods for what they needed. Farmers hired their men folk to help with

field work. But gradually, with the progression of time, the families moved elsewhere in search of other jobs.

Before "improved" roads there was mud in the spring, big snowdrifts to contend with in winter, lots of dust and washboardy roads. In earlier times the highway turned south at Butmans corner, (intersection with AA) to LaCrosse and west over the hill under Decora Peak and out to 53 by the Myhres and Grants homes.

The first bridge across the Black River was built upstream from the present bridge in 1894. Tom (or Tam) Hunter had worked over a period of about 20 years raising funds (and politicing) to have it built to replace Gordons Ferry. The bridge was replaced in 1927 and bridge #3 was dedicated in 1982.

For many years there was a store at the intersection of 54 and AA. It served the community as a small general store. Albert Baardseth built the store beside his house, (now Farnsworths). About mid – forty's Harry Johnson moved the store across the road, and later in the decade Heffners took over the store and built a home on the corner, which is now occupied by the Aleckson sisters. It's believed the store closed about the mid-70's. Besides providing tools, groceries etc., it was a meeting place for neighbors to gather and enjoy the "famous ice cream cones."

The present Farnsworth home served as a Postal Station before Rural Free Delivery came into being. A slot in a door and a stepping stone along the road attest to that era.

There have been many changes within the 150 years since the pioneer settlers came to the Prairie. From primitive land breaking implements, to tillers, flails to combines, carrying or pumping water, to electric pumps, oxen to tractors and autos, wash boards to washers and dryers, and the comparisons go on. Within a lifetime, the area has changed from primarily farming-to having only a few farmers and a wide diversity of other occupations: educators at all levels, medical professionals, and related fields, government employees, lawyers, mechanics, truckers, financial representatives, and those in the labor and construction field.

A community is only as good as the people who inhabit it!
Cherish and protect it!

ENJOY!

CREDITS-Decorah Prairie Family History by Robyn Docken---Many and Memorable-coordinated by Nancy Guthrie Bergman---History of Trempealeau County, 1917---Atlas of 1984---and individuals.

JACK/HARLEN HUNTER FARM

1854-Land purchased from US government by Julius Edwards

1855-Edwards sold to Charles Boyer

1860-Byer to Jake Hoyt

1923-Jake Hoyt to John (Jack) Hunter

1949-Jack Hunter to son Harlen

The earliest memories are of the six big beautiful maple trees planted along the driveway by the Hoyts' daughter. These stately trees survived over 100 years. The house was built possibly by Jake Hoyt and consisted of a small cellar, small kitchen, good sized pantry and living room with a big bedroom off the dining room. There was also a small bedroom off the dining room to the southeast. Stairs led from the dining room to the upstairs with two bedrooms and open area around the stairwell. There was a back entrance porch and an open porch in the front. The house was set well back from the road. There was a huge front yard which was kept trimmed with a horse drawn mower. Jack's house even had running water piped in by windmill power from the cistern on top of the hill. He also had an icehouse attached to the garage which was filled with ice cut from the Slough. Icehouses were rare on the Prairie. Many delicious containers of home made ice cream were produced in the summer. Many neighbors were invited as the ice cream had to be consumed shortly after it was made. It was served with soda crackers.

Many summer afternoons were spent with the young people of Decorah Prairie playing games in the front yard. I remember 'Red light Green light' in particular. The big barn was built in 1921. In the early spring of 1952 after raking and burning leaves all morning, Jack came in for his noon meal. Meanwhile, the leaf fire had 'sneaked' up to the house. The old wooden house caught on fire and burned to the ground. Harlen was married to Verneille by that time. They built their present home in front of the ruins of the old house and in 1952 moved in. Many baseball games were played in their front yard as the kids grew up. For awhile Harlen raised horses and had 23 at one time. One was an Appaloosa stallion and two were Shetland ponies. The Hunters also kept a milk cow and raised the tallest corn on the Prairie in the field west of the house. This field was extremely fertile as the topsoil from the surrounding hills had washed onto it over the years. Verneille is noted for her beautiful flowers. In the 1980s the top story of the barn was torn off and the foundation walls were converted into a storage shed with a new roof and siding.

The great Maple trees that shaded the yard for almost one hundred years are almost entirely gone but new trees have been planted. A new two car garage was built behind the house.

HUNTER/HANSON FARM

Original patent received from the government by power of the 1820 Act for Dispersal of Public Lands , to Charles Boyce--then to Edwards, Phillips and John Hunter Jr.in 1856. At this time, John and wife Elizabeth Glassford, were still in Maryland. In 1858 John sold the land to John Davidson.

In 1864 John Hunter Jr was killed in a horse accident. He left his land to his wife, Elizabeth who remarried to John Davidson.

In 1900 Peter Hunter (son of John Jr) bought several parcels of land from Elizabeth Davidson, Arthur Hunter, James Sam(p)son and Agnes Docken. Peter married Rose Irvine and opened a blacksmith shop at the present Hanson residence. Peter suffered from a chronic lung disease. In 1905 he sold 100 acres to William Davidson and moved to Texas.

William Davidson married a widow, Anna Johnson, who had a son, Harry. Anna and William had two daughters, Wilma(died in infancy) and Dorothy (who married Harold Schwartzhoff).

In the late 1920s, Harry Johnson married Alice DeYoung and took over the management of the farm. William, Anna and Dorothy moved to John Y. Davidson's house near the intersection of present day highways 53 and 54. Harry bought the country store from Albert Baardseth and moved it across the road to the southwest corner of his property. The Hansons operated the Decora Prairie Store until 1948 when they sold it to Vira and Al Hefner. (*Lorna Betz clerked at the store for awhile) Vira was widely noted for her huge \$.05 ice cream cones!

Al Hefner died and Vira and her son, Larry, continued to run the store. Alice Johnson died in 1960. In 1962 Morris and Margaret Hanson bought the farm from Harry Johnson.

Morris died and his widow, Margaret (Poss) new lives in the house. The Hansons had one daughter, Rachel. Considerable improvements have been made to the house.

DECORAH PRAIRIE STORE/ALECKSON HOUSE

The old Decorah Prairie Store and the home where the owners lived is located at the intersection of Highway 54 and County AA.

Harry and Alice DeYoung Johnson bought the "store" from Albert Baardseth.

In order to move it, the store had to be cut in half and then reassembled.

Johnsons ran the store for about four years until they sold it to Al and Vira Welde Hefner.

The Hefners had a house built for them next to the store. Fern Kopp was the builder.

While their house was being built the Hefners lived in a couple of chicken coops they had hauled up from the Welda farm. Al was not feeling well and died of cancer just as the house was nearing completion. Vira her son, Larry, ran the stoe for many years.

Vira was well known for her huge nickle ice cream cones and her excellant bologna.

Outside of the front door there were gas pumps. The Hochunks and the young people of the Prairie often would purchase \$.25-.35 worth of gas.

Larry married Delores and moved a mobile home in between the store and his mother's home. Larry's son, Don, lived in the house for a time after Vira's death. The house and store were eventually bought by Joe Hefner who made the store into a garage. The property was later sold to Mitch and Wendy Helmer and finally to Sara Aleckson.

DAVIDSON/WILSON HOUSE

Original patent from US government to Charles Boyce 1853 (but is not legally recorded until April 10, 1903)

In 1854 Theodore Edwards, Walworth County, sold the land to James Phillips for \$57.50.

In 1856 Warranty deed --James Phillips sold to John Hunter Jr. John married his first cousin, Elizabeth Glassford and on April 1, 1858, re-sold the land to John Davidson for \$500. The transaction was notarized by Trempealeau county's first judge- B.F. Heuston. March 1, 1860-John Davidson buys another forty acre parcel from Dexter Goodno (early land speculator).

In 1865, John was killed by a run away horse and Elizabeth married John Davidson John had two sons- John Y. and William. John Y. lived in the house where Wilsons live (2003). He married and had an adopted daughter but no children of his own.

His wife died in the 1920s and in 1928-29, the roof was taken off the house and another story added. This addition made a lovely apartment with a big kitchen and a dining room, living room and two bedrooms. There was also a large screen porch. William and Anna Davidson and daughter, Dorothy, moved from their farm (where Margaret Hanson now lives) to this new apartment where they stayed for several years. They then moved into the downstairs apartment. John Y., who was quite infirm, was taken care of at the William Hunter home. The upstairs apartment was rented to Russell and Viviane Grant. Dorothy Davidson married Harold Schwartzhoff and took care of her widowed mother, Anna. The Schwartzhoffs raised five sons and a daughter in the downstairs apartment. In 1962 they purchased Elmcroft Nursing Home.

In 1927, the William Davidsons had sold a parcel of land to Carl McKeeth, which was in turn sold to the Sol Vista Recreation Club (a nudist colony). In 1930, five acres were sold to the state for a highway easement. In 1954, Anna Davidson sold another parcel of land to Emil, Wilbur and Esther Polzin which the Polzins used as an apple stand.

In 1956 Anna died. Harry got the farm now owned by Morris Hanson and Dorothy received the farm where Wilsons now live.

In 1967 Robert Hilton and Richard Abel purchased the farm. A lot was sold to Elmer and Marian Rohde in 1967 for a home site.

The old Davidson home was remodeled and rented first to the Schermerhorns, and then Bill Finch. Bill bought the house and four acres. Ron and Blake Docken bought the balance of the land across the road from the Rohdes. Robert Hilton and Richard Abel now own thirty acres of the original Davidson farm. Kenneth Wilson bought the house and four acres from Bill Finch and resides there at this time.

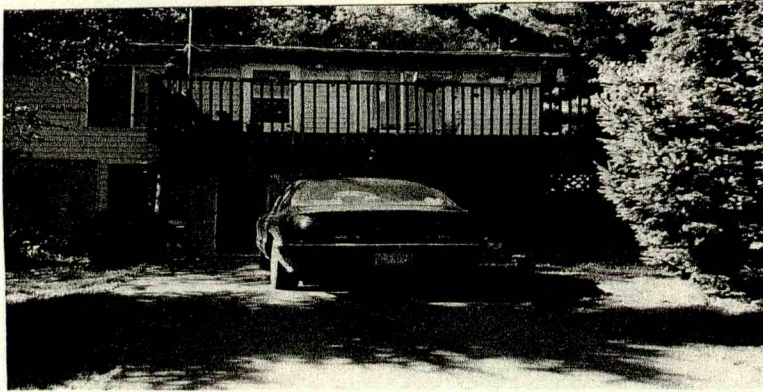
HUNTER/MULLER/McMAHON FARM

Dec. 8, 1853 Original patent to Charles Boyce

Sept. 20 1864-Boyce sold to James Sampson (sometimes spelled Samson)

1902-Samson died and left the property to his six children

1903-Robert Hunter bought the farm for \$6800.



Muller Home

1915-Sold land to Walter Hunter

1929- Twenty acres west of Highway 54 sold to William and May Hunter for \$1,000.

Another 60 acres bought from Harold and Leighton .Cook later. Willaim and May built a home which burned to the ground in December, 1931. The new home was built for \$1,500 in 1932.

1965-May Hunter sells farm to Robert and Vicky Muller

1992-House and five acres sold to the McMahons. Vicky and Bob moved Lloyd Scarseth's log home to the southeast corner of the property and live there at this time.

Hunter/McMahon Home

