

VERMONT'S VOICE

SEPTEMBER 2020

TOWN OF VERMONT, WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE • ENVIRONMENT • RECREATION

- WHAT'S INSIDE:**
- Township Treasures
 - Archery, Historical Pastime of Calm
 - A Slice of Paradise
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Welcome to the latest edition of *Vermont's Voice*. Last issue I took over the editing duties from Lisa Orman who has been serving our community in that capacity for the last 20 years. We thank her for her contribution to communicating the essential and entertaining about the Town of Vermont.

We've changed the look of the newsletter a bit, but we want to continue to bring you the information that will help strengthen the spirit of community. Please consider sending ideas and articles for the Voice to mmcdermott75@outlook.com. We know there are many wonderful stories to be told about the town, unique businesses, and individuals that are hidden in our hills. We will all benefit if you send in ideas.

Township Updates

- The town board will be making a decision to cancel the **Town Picnic for 2020**. The intent is for the **Town Picnic to resume in 2021**.
- A reminder that for the foreseeable future **Town of Vermont board meetings are being held virtually**. See the [website](#) for connection details.
- The **Annual Town Meetings** has been **delayed indefinitely**.
- **Plan Commission Meetings are held in-person but social distancing measures and state and county health measures apply**.

There is a good team to take on the Voice. This issue highlights several areas of interest for the town past and present. We cover the need to protect important natural features; important and critical features of voting in November; and a story about a wonderful business and craft cheesemaker. The survey of citizens' opinions about the town plan and related issues has been distributed, completed and returned. There have been 381 surveys returned and they are being tabulated. Results will be released when the analysis has been completed.

About COVID, we have been spared so far. I, the retired ER doc, follow the numbers and status each day for COVID in Dane County. Cases are under 2% positive range for the last 5 weeks. Lots of tests are being done and there are maybe 20 to 50 cases a day.* People around here, from what I can see, are generally being safe with the wearing of masks, proper distancing and limiting gatherings. We need these safety measure in place for a time yet so be careful. Let's all do our part to keep COVID away.

Thanks, and stay safe Michael McDermott
*Source: <https://publichealthmsdc.com/coronavirus>

This issue's featured cover image is an aerial view of the Mckelison dairy farm located on Union Valley Road. This beautiful family farm that has been in existence for over 110 years.



TOWNSHIP TREASURES
The future of our Natural Areas
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ARCHERY
A pastime of calm
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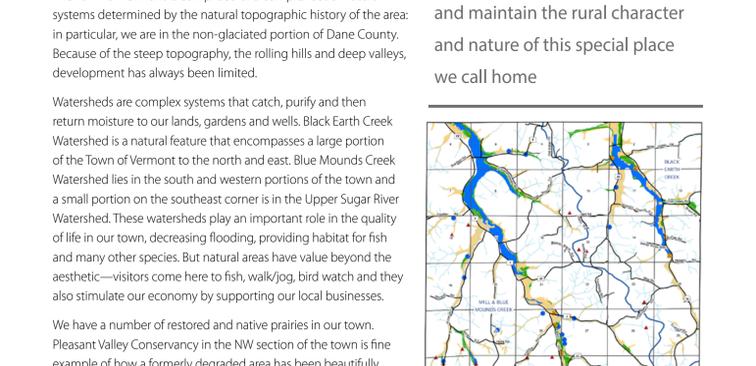


A SLICE OF PARADISE
Bleu Mont Dairy
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VERMONT AND THE VOTE
Be prepared for the election
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OUR ENVIRONMENT



OUR NATURAL AREAS – TREASURES OF OUR TOWNSHIP

Pleasant Valley Nature Conservancy

by Barbara Borns

All one has to do is drive westward on Mineral Point Road or Highway 14 from Middleton to view the effects development has had on the landscape. There are now sub-divisions on top of sub-divisions where there once were farms, open prairies and woodlands. I don't hear very much about the impacts all this development has on the environment; it certainly leads to the abandonment of land for the growing of food crops. Once natural areas have been paved over, it is rare for them to be restored to continue providing their natural functions. Changes in our climate are bringing to the forefront ample reason to carefully consider how our actions today will impact what our Town of Vermont will look like in the future.

In 2011 the Town of Vermont approved a Land Use plan, with revisions in 2017. Now nearly ten years later we are taking stock of what that document said and where we might want to make some alterations.

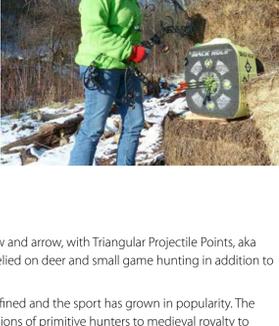
After the original Indigenous inhabitants —probably Ho-Chunk and Fox/Sauk tribes —were forced to move away as European settlers came to reside here in the early 1840/50's and beyond. Farming drew these Europeans to the area and continues today. The Town of Vermont is comprised of a complex set of natural systems determined by the natural topographic history of the area: in particular, we are in the non-glaciated portion of Dane County. Because of the steep topography, the rolling hills and deep valleys, development has always been limited.

Watersheds are complex systems that catch, purify and then return moisture to our lands, gardens and wells. Black Earth Creek Watershed is a natural feature that encompasses a large portion of the Town of Vermont to the north and east. Blue Mounds Creek Watershed lies in the south and western portions of the town and a small portion on the southeast corner in the Upper Sugar River Watershed. These watersheds play an important role in the quality of life in our town, decreasing flooding, providing habitat for fish and many other species. But natural areas have value beyond the aesthetic—visitors come here to fish, walk/jog, bird watch and they also stimulate our economy by supporting our local businesses.

We have a number of restored and native prairies in our town. Pleasant Valley Conservancy in the NW section of the town is fine example of how a formerly degraded area has been beautifully restored to native species. It is not only beautiful as the restoration offers a host of other benefits such as protecting wildlife and unique plant habitats while offering educational opportunities for all ages.

Because of their deep root systems, some 10-15 feet in depth, prairies are very efficient in capturing rainfall, allowing moisture to infiltrate rather than runoff during intense rain events. The quality of our land, water and air is dependent on how we care for these systems. Once they have been altered and degraded it is difficult to restore.

...we need to be mindful, and continue to carefully preserve and maintain the rural character and nature of this special place we call home



Wetlands in Vermont



The Town of Vermont is fortunately one of few remaining mostly undeveloped townships in Dane county. Before our family purchase land and moved here over 30 years ago, I had not heard of the Town of Vermont. I now realize our township has so far been able to retain the natural features that made it attractive to us and other residents. As we move forward toward updating our land use plan, we as a town we need to be mindful, and continue to carefully preserve and maintain the rural character and nature of this special place we call home.

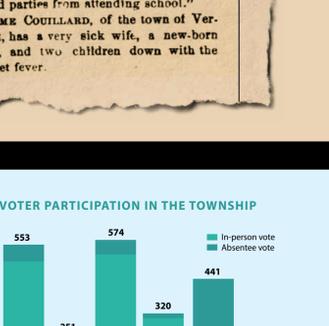
Vermont Creek

OUR PASTIMES

Archery, Historical Pastime of Calm

by Judy Robb

The word archery conjures up a variety of imagery for people: pastime, competition, sport, hunting, relaxation, self-challenge. Whatever your feeling, we can all agree archery is the skilled use of a bow and arrow with then end goal of effectively hitting a target – and archery has been around for a long time. The oldest known arrows date back 60 – 70 thousand years ago and were found in southeastern African caves. In Great Britain, archery became practiced as recreation between 1780 and 1840 with competitions comprised of activities such as archers having to dislodge a wooden parrot from the top of an abbey tower.²



Here in Wisconsin, when farm fields are plowed in the springtime and rain glistens the earth, a dedicated treasure hunter may find an arrowhead, left by indigenous peoples hunting this land long before European settlers called this area home. The Late Woodland Period in Wisconsin, 1,100 B.C. - 400 A.D., notes the onset of the use of the bow and arrow, with Triangular Projectile Points, aka arrowheads, used by Wisconsin Indigenous peoples of this time who relied on deer and small game hunting in addition to small scale farming for sustenance.³

Times have changed. Archery tools have evolved and become more refined and the sport has grown in popularity. The design of the **longbow** could be deemed the most traditional, with visions of primitive hunters to medieval royalty to trendy Victorians coming to mind. The **compound bow** became popular for hunting in the 1970's. Recently the technology enabled **crossbow** is leveraged by hunters, with a crossbow-user being referred to as *arballists* rather than an archer.⁴

In Wisconsin, the bowhunting population grew from 40 in 1934 to about 104,000 during the late 1960s to early 1970s. During this time bowhunters hunted primarily from the ground while shooting longbows and recurve bows with wooden, fiberglass or aluminum arrows. The sport grew in popularity in the mid 1970's to mid-1980's with the advent of compound bows and arrow release-aids.⁵

Many of our fellow Vermonters, women and men, enjoy archery for recreation and sport whether it be longbow, compound bow or crossbow. Archers are an earth-appreciating sort, enjoying the challenges of target shooting or the tranquil moments of anticipation in a tree stand waiting for the day's prey. Bowhunters know a great deal about deer and deer-hunting, and many spend months preparing their sacred hunting areas and sprucing their tree-stands or ground blinds to get them just right. Hunter chatter is often made up of "experts" pontificating on the best grunt calls to use and when, where tree rubs converge on a deer path, how the moon affects the hunt and stories of the big buck captured on a trail camera, all of which inspires the excitement leading up to opening morning.

Whether for sport or recreation, archery in Wisconsin is steeped in history and lore. There are many organizations that can provide additional information regarding traditional archery or bowhunting.

Wisconsin's deer archery and crossbow season opens Saturday September 12.

Enjoy!

- Resources:**
- Wisconsin Bowhunters Association <https://www.wisconsinbowhunters.org>
 - Wisconsin Traditional Archers <http://wistadarchers.com>
 - Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Hunt>

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_archery

² <http://www.historyofarchery.com>

³ <http://somerspointofarchery.blogspot.com/2012/01/arrowheads.html>

⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arballist_\(crossbowman\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arballist_(crossbowman))

⁵ <https://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/story/sports/outdoors/2016/09/02/wisconsin-bowhunting-history-finds-its-place/89442068>

OUR NEIGHBORS



A SLICE OF PARADISE: Notes on a Visit to Bleu Mont Dairy

by Kimberly Ann Priest

Drive south along Country Highway F and, if you are keeping a keen eye out for it, you'll see a three-pronged windmill piercing the sky to your left. Tucked back away from the road, Bleu Mont Dairy sits at the end of the long dirt driveway (found just before you reach the windmill), among woodlands and wildflowers and, in July, under a bright blue open sky. From the smell of freshly roasted coffee coming from the house to the "living roof" on the greenhouse to the variety of alternative energy sources used to power both home and business, Bleu Mont Dairy is a testament to sustainability and quality craftsmanship. Owner Willi Lehner learned to make cheese from his father, a Swiss immigrant who ran cheese factories in Browntown, WI as well as Mt. Horeb, WI (in the location that is now The Grumpy Troll). In his early 20's Willi traveled back to Switzerland to perfect his cheese craft with local artisans. About 35 years ago, seeking land for his operations, Willie found 15 acres in the Town of Vermont, WI where he established Bleu Mont Dairy.

The wall, constructed with material from the property, with a living roof, where the cheese is first stored

Bleu Mont Dairy is a testament to sustainability and quality craftsmanship

The dairy reflects years of attention to both craft and a quality lifestyle. Willi and his partner Kitas have installed a wind generator and photovoltaic panels to power the grid that provides electricity for their home and business, and hot water panels to heat their water. The greenhouse and cheese "cave" are covered with moss and grasses blending each into the landscape. And as I and Michael McDermott sat with Willi and Kitas to discuss the cheese-making process, they offered a cup of coffee made from that morning's freshly roasted beans.



The affnage (aging in English) room where cheese is stored to age, improving the taste and texture

Everything about the environment and the experience assured me of their loving attention to detail.

The milk they use in their cheeses is hormone-free and Willi explained that he only uses milk from grass-fed cattle, limiting his cheese production to the months of the year that can be fed in open pasture. And, anyway, says Willi, "winter is for skiing." Clad in moon-printed harem pants and a Mardi Gras t-shirt, Willi casually explained the cheese-making process to Michael and me with a twinkle in his eye. It's easy to see he loves his work. Likewise, I thoroughly enjoyed a slice of Bandaged Cheddar, as I learned that affnage is the term for the process of curing (aging) cheese; that soil microbes (terrior) cultivated from their property was used to inoculate their greatly sought after Earth Schmier cheese; and that their cheeses are sold locally as well as to places on the East and West coasts, Chicago, and Minneapolis. Additionally, Bleu Mont Cheese has been well-awarded by the American Cheese Society in state and national competitions since 2006.

The Bandaged Cheddar I was given was caramel, nutty, and sweet in my mouth with an earthy and raw texture—something I imagine I would enjoy again with a glass of semi-dry Chardonnay. In fact, wine entered the conversation toward the end of our time together as Kitas told the story of how her favorite cheese got its name. After consuming a bottle with friends, she says, in a state of bliss, they came up with "Lil'Will's Big Cheese."

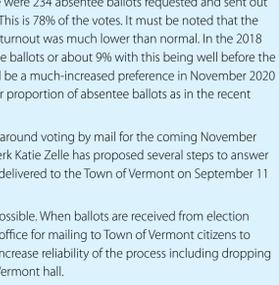
But there is nothing small about Bleu Mont Dairy or the care both Willi (once referred to as an Off-the-Grid-Rockstar) and Kitas take tending to land, home, and production. Walking away from the rustic wood-clad home bordered by orange, yellow, and purple flowers and tucked away from the road, I felt as though I had not only enjoyed a slice of excellent cheese, but also basked in a slice of paradise and the bright company of two warm, hospitable cheese-makers.

OUR GOVERNMENT

VERMONT AND THE VOTE

Schedule of upcoming election and important dates:
General Election Day: November 3, 2020

VOTER PARTICIPATION IN THE TOWNSHIP



Voting in the Town of Vermont, August and November, 2020

by Michael McDermott

Note, see the important message from Katie Zelle, our town clerk on the process of absentee voting for November and her steps to make sure this works for you.

The election November 2 will be extremely consequential; a belief held by whatever party Town of Vermont citizens support. We know that the method of voting has become controversial, especially around the issue of absentee or mail-in ballots. During the COVID pandemic even more than usual voters supporting either major party have increased their desire and need to vote by mail. Lets take a look at the primary election results from August 11, 2020 and then compare this to previous elections. For the election on August 11 there were 234 absentee ballots requested and sent out while there were 171 votes actually cast that way out of 220 votes cast. This is 78% of the votes. It must be noted that the party preference primary then had almost no contested races; thus the turnout was about much lower than normal. In the 2018 gubernatorial election there were 574 votes cast with about 50 absentee ballots or about 9% with this being well before the COVID issue threatened the health of voters. It is apparent that there will be a much-increased preference in November 2020 for absentee voting. If we have 500 votes cast in November and a similar proportion of absentee ballots as in the recent primary that would mean about 375 votes will be cast in this manner.

Questions have been raised about problems with the US Postal Service around voting by mail for the coming November election. To lessen the likelihood of such problems, Town of Vermont clerk Katie Zelle has proposed several steps to answer questions and provide guidance. We now know that the ballots will be delivered to the Town of Vermont on September 11 and the clerks will begin mailing them out on September 14th.

The clerk encourages Vermont citizens to apply for a ballot as soon as possible. When ballots are received from election officials on the 11th, they will be hand delivered to the Mt. Horeb post office for mailing to Town of Vermont citizens to decrease turnaround time. Katie provides several other suggestions to increase reliability of the process including dropping completed and timed ballots through the mail slot at the Town of Vermont hall.

Regardless of political views the coming election is an extremely important one and our participation is crucial. Wisconsin has played a significant role in the past and will again. You may vote in-person thanks to the dedication of the clerk and those citizens who are election inspectors or you may vote absentee. If you vote absentee, follow the suggestions that Katie has provided.

November 2020 Election Guidelines and Tips from the Town of Vermont Clerk, Katie Zelle:

- Ballots will be delivered to the Town of Vermont September 11, mailing to Town of Vermont residents will begin September 14.
- If you have not already requested an absentee ballot for November, please go to myvote.wj.gov to request one. If you are unsure if you have made a request, you may check your ballot request and status. I encourage you to make your request as soon as possible to ensure timely delivery to you.
- Ballot requests and the mailing of ballots will take place every day leading up to the election.
- Ballots are hand-delivered to the Mount Horeb Post Office – this way ballots are not routed through the Milwaukee distribution center for sorting.
- If you return your ballot by mail, taking it to the Mount Horeb office ensures the fastest delivery to the Town of Vermont hall. If you mail your ballot, it does require a stamp.
- I am in regular communication with the Mount Horeb Post Office staff to ensure we receive all completed the ballots by 8 pm election day.
- I strongly encourage you to drop your ballot through the mail slot in the door to Town of Vermont hall. Town hall is locked and secured, and I collect ballots daily, mark them as received and lock them away until election day. Bringing your ballot to town hall ensures that your ballot will be received on time.
- As always, make certain to get your absentee envelope signed by a witness, and do not forget to have your witness write their address in the space provided. Both of these things are required to count your vote. Ballot envelopes without a witness signature cannot be opened or counted.
- Some people have asked about picking up a ballot in person. Due to schools being "virtual" this fall, my office hours are unpredictable.
- In-person absentee voting in the Town of Vermont has always been by appointment, but with the increased interest and the challenges of childcare during the pandemic I may be unable to keep up with individual requests for appointments. If there is interest, I may arrange a few evenings when in-person absentee voting could take place, or ballots could be picked up in person.
- Many of you contact me by phone or email to check if your ballot has been received. You can check this online as well at myvote.wj.gov if you do not have access to the internet I am, as always, here to help.

OUR NEWSLETTER

We need your ideas and photos!

Have an up and coming business in the township? An interesting hobby or passion? Know of a long-time resident who has a fascinating story to tell? Contact us and we may include it in an upcoming issue.

We'd also love to highlight the variety of views of our township – send us your photos! Our plan is to use a different season image each issue on the header.

Contact Michael McDermott or Judy Robb at the email addresses below.



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Town Treasurer Becca Thompson	608-767-2457(x3)
Town Board Supervisor Scott Moe	608-437-9842
Town Board Supervisor (Seat 2) John Hallick	608-767-2225
Town Board Supervisor (Seat 3) Alex McKenzie	608-437-9842
Town Board Supervisor (Seat 4) Doug Meier	608-219-1886

VERMONT TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

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Plan Commission Vice Chair Jim Ellerson	608-767-3553
Plan Commission Member Judy Robb	608-338-3106
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Plan Commission Member Dean Bossenbroek	608-669-1728
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