

GONSTEAD THE HEALER

THE LEGENDARY CHIROPRACTOR OF MOUNT HOREB By Arlo Paust

Clarence Selmer Gonstead, "The Healer." Many in the Mount Horeb area know his name, but do we really know the man? He may be the village's most famous former citizen. A chiropractic method known as the "Gonstead Method" is practiced around the world, but how did he get his start? What were his influences? Why Mount Horeb?

Although born in South Dakota in 1898, both Clarence's mother and father were from south of Mount Horeb, part of the historic Norwegian Blue Mounds Settlement. His father, Carl Gonstead, was raised in the Kittleson Valley of Perry township while his mother, Sarah Hustad, was raised in York township, Green County, not far from Hustad Valley in Primrose and New Glarus townships. Carl & Sarah were married at the "new" York Church in 1894 before heading west to meet two Gonstead siblings in the more plentiful fields of South Dakota.

The family returned within a decade — by 1904 — and Carl & Sarah settled on a farm in Primrose township,

a few miles south of Mount Vernon on Garfoot Road. Clarence was about 6 years old at the time and he attended school in the village. The family's dairy farm was successful, requiring an intense work ethic that Clarence would later carry into his chiropractic practice. Sadly, his mother was adjudged insane in 1913 and was sent to the Mendota Institute. She died there five years later, but Clarence's father did not remarry. Education was put aside for farm work, leading Clarence to complete his eighth grade education just before he turned 20 in 1918.

Locally, Clarence's father had been known as an excellent bone-setter for livestock.

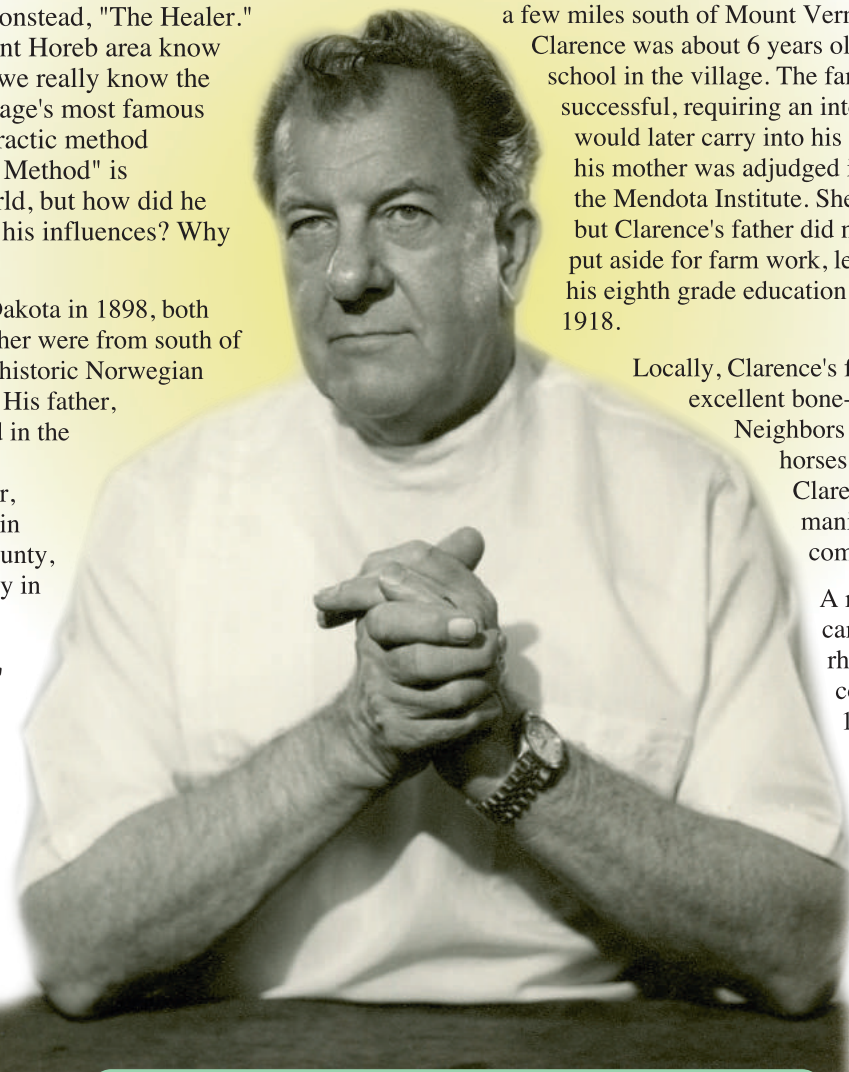
Neighbors would bring their cows or horses to have them treated, so Clarence learned the concept of manipulating bones to achieve comfort from a young age.

A real turning point for Clarence came when he developed rheumatoid arthritis and was confined to his bed around 1921. He had been working as an auto mechanic and staying with his father's sister Diana in Madison. She let him try his luck with the University doctors before calling her doctor, a chiropractor, to help. Clarence was quickly healed and the experience proved pivotal in his life trajectory. He appreciated being healed without the use of medicine or surgery.

Chiropractic care grew out of the midwest and was very

controversial at the time. The Palmer men, who founded the Palmer School of Chiropractic in 1897 in Davenport, Iowa, were the inventors and Wisconsin and Iowa had more chiropractors per capita than any other states. Even today, people who visit from other parts of the country are astounded by the proliferation of chiropractors here.

In 1922, despite opposition from his father, Clarence enrolled in the one-year course at Palmer. The ... *continued on pg 2*



Dr. Clarence Gonstead with his healing hands, ca. 1956; below: an aerial image of the Gonstead Clinic built in 1964 and the Karakahl Inn behind it, ca. 1969.



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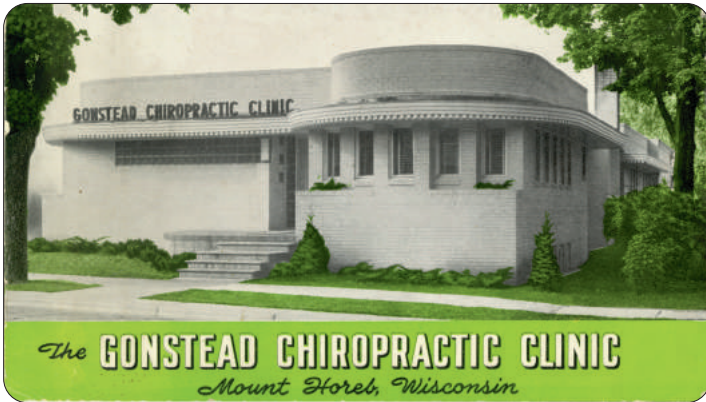
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Mount Horeb Area Historical Society



continued from cover... largest and first school of its type, they had ads in the newspaper that included a comic strip and the line: "You simply cannot be healthy and happy, if nature is interfered with. Chiropractic is man's agent to help nature to make you well and keep you so." Area chiropractors who had studied there explained in their ads that "every disease known to man can be cured" through their services. These words would have resonated with Clarence's rural upbringing.

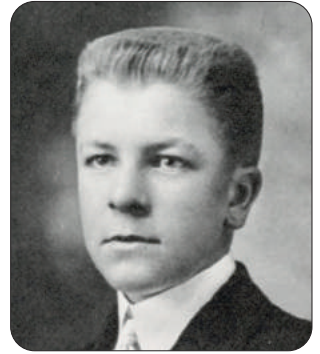
Wisconsin, and the midwest, was a center of forward thinking at this time, riding on the heels of populist movements, progressive politics, and a general knowledge of the corruption of large institutions including banks, politics, food industry, and railroads. The medical field was not always the most trusted either and new western medicines did not always work so well. Further, they stood in direct contrast to centuries-old traditional healing methods that held strong in tight-knit communities like those found in the rural Mount Horeb area. Chiropractic science was closely based upon the well-known practice of bone-setting and common sense.

Midwesterners were not afraid of being at the forefront of opposition to the ideas purported by large institutions. They had confidence in their own ways. Local Mount Horeb area men were popular figureheads. Robert M. LaFollette was a national figure who ran for President in 1924 as a Progressive candidate and the WI State Treasurer was Solomon Levitan, leading the state's finances with concern for the everyday people. Wisconsinites felt full of pride.

There also seemed to be a big proportion of Norwegians (with their rural populist leanings) that practiced chiropractics in Madison as early as 1908 with doctor names such as Fitzstad, Kvitrud, Helland, Olson, and Tyvand. Olson had been Gonstead's healer of his rheumatoid arthritis and Dr. Otto Tyvand was born on a farm in Perry Township located between those of Clarence's parents' childhood homes.

Not long after Clarence graduated from Palmer School of Chiropractic in 1923, it just so happened there was a chiropractor in Mount Horeb, B.J. Jones, that was looking to sell his business

above the bank building on East Main Street. Clarence had a rough start, so Jones returned to help and they briefly worked as partners, before Jones departed for good. On Valentine's Day, 1924 Clarence married Elvira Meister of Brooklyn, WI and they soon took up residence at 217 Center Avenue.

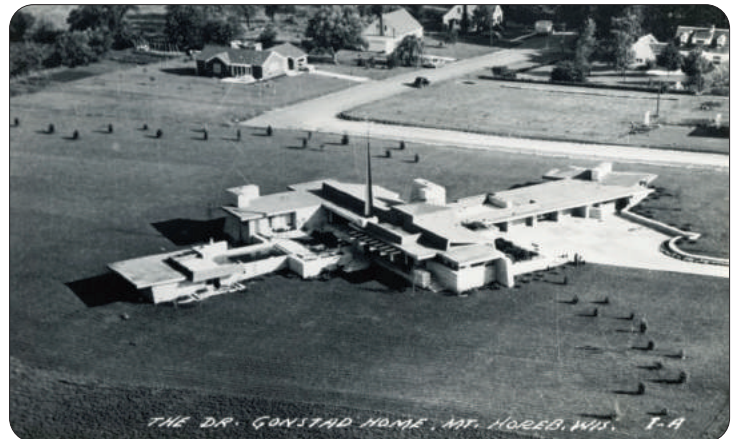
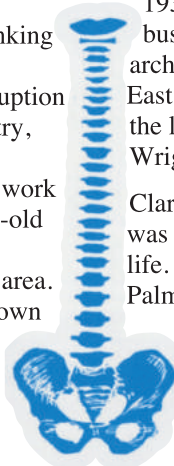


Clarence worked and succeeded through the simple desire to heal, getting his clientele from local residents and word-of-mouth. His younger brother Merton followed in his footsteps, also studying at Palmer and ultimately joined the Gonstead Chiropractic Clinic from 1929 to 1934. Merton had also studied embalming at a mortuary, further aiding an interest in anatomy that may have led Clarence to study the spines of cadavers himself. After leaving the partnership, Merton then practiced in Monroe and Beloit.

Like many, Clarence attended the World's Fair in Chicago in 1933, where he saw "International Style" architecture. As his business succeeded, more space was needed and this fancy architectural style was incorporated into a new building at 202 East Main Street (pictured at left). Next came a house in 1951, the largest in the village, with a very modern Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired design.

Clarence's success can be attributed to several factors. Gonstead was a workhorse, something he learned from childhood farm-life. Another big factor came into play when B.J. Palmer, of the Palmer School of Chiropractic, decided to shift the curriculum to a focus on the cervical spine only. Gonstead, however, continued a full spinal examination process that ultimately satisfied more people. Patients would fly in from different states for his effective healing hands. It was not unusual for 300 patients to walk through the doors each day.

This success did not go without notice and other chiropractors wanted to learn his secrets. Gonstead himself was not a good public speaker or promoter, but a chiropractor couple, Ted and Phyllis Markham, found his work profound and took it upon themselves to encourage his method to proliferate. The Markhams marketed classes for chiropractors to attend in Mount



Above: The first Gonstead Clinic, built in 1939 on East Main Street where the Telephone Company now stands
Above left: Clarence Gonstead in his youth, ca. 1913
Bottom: The home of Dr. and Elvira Gonstead

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Horeb beginning in 1954. Gonstead gave demonstrations on his methodology and the classes gradually grew in popularity. The classes soon became seminars and a whole new business began in 1962 called "Gonstead Seminars of Chiropractic." The events were held in places such as New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Boston, and Mount Horeb. The Gonstead crew flew to these wildly successful events and were highly influential in the chiropractic field. In the meantime, the Palmer School of Chiropractic rewrote its technique curriculum with the Gonstead method as its cornerstone. Always dedicated to his patients, Clarence added more hours to his workday and would often not finish until 2:30am.

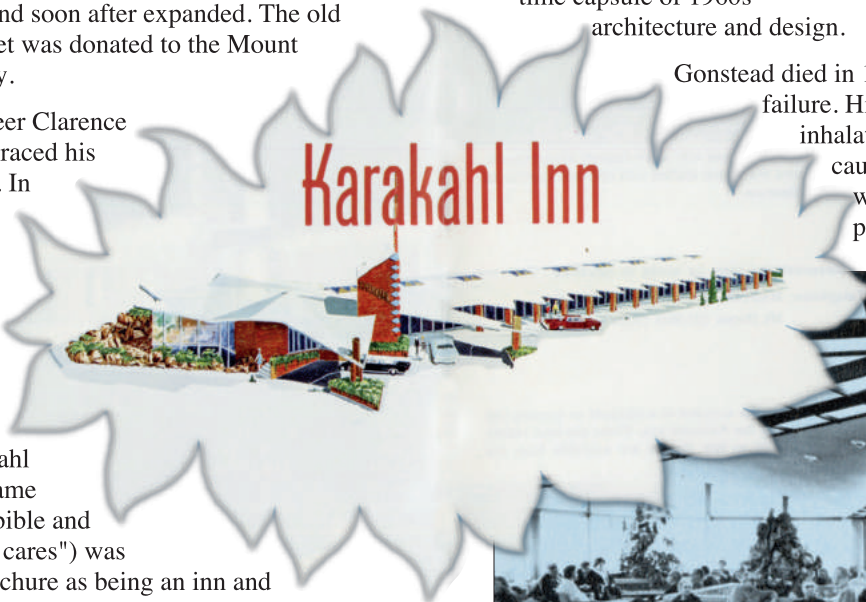
The Gonstead world expanded so entirely that an airstrip was built by his house property in 1957 so that patients could fly in on private planes. The exploding popularity grew the need for a new larger clinic, built in 1964 on the East end of Mount Horeb. To house patients, the Karakahl Inn motel and restaurant was built next door in 1965 and soon after expanded. The old clinic on Main Street was donated to the Mount Horeb public library.

Throughout his career Clarence Gonstead fully embraced his Norwegian descent. In the words of the Gonstead Clinic Patient Handbook, the new clinic was "a large Y-shaped building of contemporary Scandinavian design." The Karakahl Inn (whose name came from a Norwegian bible and means "Leave your cares") was described by its brochure as being an inn and

supper club that featured "Traditional Norwegian Hospitality." Vikings, rosemalling, and Norwegian long boats decorated their advertising materials. Gonstead could have left Mount Horeb at any point, but he must have appreciated the village and his familial and ancestral connections. His clinic was said to have received 4 million visitors, including patients from every state and from several foreign countries.

In 1974, when he was 76, Clarence Gonstead sold his business to two chiropractors that worked with him, Alex and Douglas Cox. There was some difficulty in letting go, but ultimately the landmark clinic is still open today and still bears the Gonstead name. The clinic is an impeccably well-kept time capsule of 1960s architecture and design.

Gonstead died in 1978 at the age of 80 from heart failure. His wife, Elvira, died of smoke inhalation when their sprawling house caught fire in 1991. The 90-year-old woman had a well known proclivity ... *continued on pg 4*



Above: Clarence and Elvira Gonstead pose in front of their plane. This photo was used for their Christmas card one year.
Above right: The cover of a brochure demonstrating the features of the Karakahl Inn
Bottom: The interior of the Gonstead Clinic built in 1964

REOPENING CHALLENGE GOAL SMASHED!

YOU DID IT!

Early this year, two long-serving volunteers presented the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society with a heartwarming challenge: they wanted to help; they wanted to inspire generosity; they wanted to light a spark in the COVID-induced gloom that MHAHS --and thousand of families, businesses and small town historical societies-- were facing. These volunteers offered to underwrite a limited-term fundraising campaign that would match donations up to \$10,000. After much thought, we decided to couple this challenge with the May reopening of the Driftless Historium.

Thanks to the support of our history-loving community, we not only met, but exceeded, our "Reopening and Reconnecting Challenge"! As of August 15, the challenge's official closing date, we received 86 donations totaling \$14,736! When added to the \$10,000 challenge funds, that's an unexpected \$24,736 that is so appreciated and will help us carry forward our mission of saving and sharing your history. Allow us a final THANK YOU to all who donated to the Challenge and piggy-backed on this unexpected act of hope and generosity by our two anonymous angels.



continued from pg 3... for shopping and, by this time, she had literally boxed herself in with stacks and parcels of furniture, clothing, and ephemera. The house has since been restored.

Clarence and Elvira never had children. His intense work ethic no doubt contributed to this, and some speculate a fear of passing his mother's potentially hereditary severe mental health struggles also played a part.

Gonstead is credited with the invention of several innovations in chiropractic methods including the



"Gonstead Viking X-Ray". His most lasting legacy is the Gonstead Method of Chiropractic that is considered a

cornerstone of chiropractic history and is practiced around the world today. As Matthew Amman's book, "Gonstead the Adjuster" states, Gonstead "carefully moved bones in a way that looked effortless to observers yet effective and comfortable to patients." It was the Gonstead technique that led "the chiropractic profession toward clinical competency."

At the local level, Gonstead played a significant role in Mount Horeb's Norwegian

tourism theme. One of the main proponents of the village's Norwegian-themed ventures was Lee Vogel. He and his wife Nancy moved to Mount Horeb only because Lee was a marketer for the Gonstead Seminars and Nancy's sister, Phyllis Markham, was a Gonstead promoter. Although they were not Norwegian, they were influenced by Clarence's pride (among other locals) and the Vogels used their hard-earned money to create the Norwegian gift shop, Open House Imports, in the late 60s. They were



also on the Chamber of Commerce Board, serving on the advertising committee; were progenitors of the annual "Song of Norway" productions in the village; and were instrumental in the creation of Mount Horeb's Trollway theme. So, despite a well-documented dislike for taxes, could Gonstead be thanked for the continued thriving economy of Mount Horeb? Would today's

Trollway exist without Dr. Clarence Gonstead? Nobody can deny that there were few things Gonstead loved more than Mount Horeb. ●

See also the "Gonstead Oral History Project" on page 8.



Above left: Clarence & Elvira Gonstead at their 50th Wedding Anniversary party, 1974
Above: Dr. Gonstead at a Gonstead Seminar, 1972
Left: A Gonstead Chiropractor teaching at the same seminar

LOCAL HISTORIC PROPERTIES: THE SKINDRUD FARM

By Jackie Sale, Mount Horeb Landmarks Foundation

Reacting the mission of the Mount Horeb Landmarks Foundation, President Jackie Sale is contributing a series of articles about local properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since its inception, the main focus of the Landmarks Foundation, an all volunteer 501c3 non profit, has been the restoration and maintenance of the District #1 Old Schoolhouse (110 N 2nd St, Mt Horeb). But part of the organization's mission is to promote historic preservation.

The Eric and Jerome Skindrud farm just east of Mount Horeb at 3070 Town Hall Road in the Town of Springdale was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The farm looks like many of the farmsteads around Mount Horeb with its white two story farmhouse, outbuildings and rolling land. It appears so very typical, so what makes it historical? When reading of its long history we can see its historical importance comes from not being unusual but in being typical. It is an exceptionally well preserved example of the transition made by second generation immigrants from the pioneer life to progressive farm practices. The difficult pioneering period with log buildings and rail fences gave way to a period of prosperity with large two story homes, dairy barns, outbuildings, and soil conservation practices.

In 1856 Thosten Thompson-Rue and his wife Guri Gaarden bought 240 acres on the southeast slope of the Military Ridge, a part of our familiar steep and rolling driftless area. Thosten was born in Norway on the Rue farm, immigrated to America in 1839 and eventually became one of the first pioneer settlers in Springdale with his brother, John Thompson, in 1846. John did not stay long but soon left for California at the time of the Gold Rush where he was to become famous as "Snowshoe Thompson." For 20 years he braved the Sierra Nevada Mountains in winter delivering U.S. mail on his homemade skis.

Thosten and John Thompson were some of the first settlers in the area and their home was the first Norwegian house built along the Military Road, the first and once the only road through Dane



Above: The Thosten and Guri Thompson-Rue family at the farm, ca. 1880. The barn still stands. The house was replaced.
Below: The Skindrud Farm as it looked, ca. 1994

County and now Hwy. S. Here many Norwegian land seekers would stop and were always welcomed by the Thompsens. Among some of the early immigrants who were lured to this Norwegian settlement by glowing reports from earlier settlers were Erick Olson Skindrud and Aslak and Ole Lie.

At first the immigrants were wheat farmers, but gradually transitioned to dairy farming with the statewide boom in livestock and dairying beginning the 1870's. Thosten and his son Henry built a large dairy barn, one of the first in the area, 34 by 100 feet, in 1876, and the gable-roofed section still stands today. The gambrel-roofed section of the barn was added around 1915 and the milk house around 1940. The first barn is a well preserved example of a building type which is the hallmark of the changeover in Wisconsin agriculture from wheat farming to dairying.

Thosten died in 1880 and his son Henry took over the farm. Henry, married to Annie Skindrud, built an impressive new house in 1909. The Queen Anne style home has had additions but maintains much of its original appearance and some well-preserved ornamentation. It is a classic example of a grand two story wood framed farm house, showing the prosperity of the dairy industry at that time.

In 1914, Henry Thompson moved to a ... *continued on pg 10*



DONATION SPOTLIGHT: AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL BICYCLE

By Brian Bigler

Forty-five years ago, in 1976, America celebrated its Bicentennial. The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society was a one-year-old fledgling organization with no museum and a growing and ambitious group of volunteers. The Society sponsored and created its first, and basically only, portable exhibit when it took part in the big Bicentennial festivities held at the Dane County Fairgrounds—now the Alliant Center—in October of that year. The Society’s volunteers assembled an entire general store that was viewed by thousands. In fact, the crowds were so dense you could hardly find room to walk.

The Historical Society received its first artifact in this year, a carpet with a Bicentennial motif gifted to area nonprofits by a Madison bank. Area residents and people throughout the United States created everything “Bicentennial,” such as painted milk cans with American eagle decals; red, white, and blue quilts; and American flags painted on barn walls. Retail outlets had a heyday offering Bicentennial bells, rugs, coasters, canning jars, wall hangings, plates and anything else that could be decorated with The Liberty Bell, an eagle, or an American flag. Many of Wisconsin’s small historical societies owe their founding dates to this national event.

Not to be outdone, the Schwinn Bicycle Company, located at that time in Chicago, Illinois, entered 1976 with a great deal of company optimism. The Schwinn ‘76 Bicycles Catalog that year featured a red, white, and blue cover and the following statement: “1976 could well be bicycling’s biggest year! Already the excitement and pride of the nation’s Bicentennial year is inspiring millions of Americans to reacquaint themselves with the wonders and blessings of this great land. And what better way to get closer to America than under your own power, on a bike...”

The company created a special line of limited edition Bicentennial decorated bicycles geared for children. The sleek

and modern Stingray line of bikes that had captivated youngsters in the early 1970s featured a banana seat and cool, tall “biker-style” handlebars. The special Bicentennial model was painted white with an American flag decal and festive red and blue striping. It was optional to order the bicycle with a red, white, and blue flag-motif seat, or the original that was plain blue.



Above: Holly and Tonja VanCamp, aged 7 and 8, in 1976. The back of the photo says "new bikes and bell bottom pants." Holly's bike, seen below, is in the Historium collections.

and modern Stingray line of bikes that had captivated youngsters in the early 1970s featured a banana seat and cool, tall “biker-style” handlebars. The special Bicentennial model was painted white with an American flag decal and festive red and blue striping. It was optional to order the bicycle with a red, white, and blue flag-motif seat, or the original that was plain blue.

In this year, Jim and Marley VanCamp of Mount Horeb purchased for their young daughters, Holly and Tonja, new bicycles at Atkins Bicycles in Verona simply because they needed transportation to maneuver the streets around their 4th Street neighborhood. Tonja received a traditional-colored bike while Holly was gifted the Bicentennial version with the VanCamps opting for the plain blue seat. Holly took very good care of her prized possession. After Holly outgrew the bicycle the VanCamps hung it from the



ceiling in their garage, if for no other reason than as a memento of their daughter’s youthful years and of the nation’s big birthday celebration.

In 2020, the VanCamps decided to sell their historic house and start a new life chapter. It was time to part with the bicycle and numerous other family keepsakes—the Historical Society became their new home!

WHAT'S IN A NAME? : TOWN OF PERRY

By Jackie Sale
Intro by Arlo Paust

The Town of Perry, south of Mount Horeb, was named after Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, the gallant young American officer whose fame stems from the War of 1812. He was best known for a naval battle on Lake Erie that was integral to the removal of British control over the Great Lakes and access to what is now known as the Midwest.

Although Commodore Perry seems like an odd choice of namesake for the township, as he had little to no relation to the area, he had become a hot name in the press of his day and was remembered for his youth, leadership skills, and young death. Further, it must be understood that, when Town of Perry was named in 1849, the War of 1812 was a well-remembered battle of significant size in U.S. history and the heroes were still valorized. The only settlers in the township with more than a one year residence were U.S. citizens from the East. Even among them, none had been in Perry longer than three years. Previously, the Town of Perry, and neighboring Primrose, had been part of Montrose. It was then still politically part of Primrose until 1854 when a governing board of five Norwegian men and an American-born chairman was elected.

While having no apparent personal connection to Dane County or Wisconsin, Oliver Perry's victory against the British ensured U.S. control of the Northwest and must still have been paramount in the minds of the organizers of the Town of Perry when it was named in his honor.

Born into an accomplished naval family in Rhode Island in 1785, Oliver Hazard Perry's life was dominated by maritime pursuits. Perry spent his youth sailing with his father, became a midshipman at the age of 13, and became known as a brilliant naval commander and American naval hero. Throughout his naval career he fought in many of the main wars of the early nineteenth century. Locally, Perry is a familiar name, not for local people or places, but because it is believed the Town of Perry, the southwestern most township in Dane County, is named in honor of this American naval war hero.

Oliver Perry first saw extensive service during the Quasi-War with France and was stationed in Haiti where he played a role in the Haitian Revolution. He saw action during the First Barbary



Above: Men wave their hats atop the "Big Stone" in the Kittleson Valley of Town of Perry ca. 1900

Below: Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry



The victory at Lake Erie confirmed U.S. control of the lake and established U.S. sovereignty over Ohio and Michigan territories. Perry was promoted to the rank of Captain and bestowed with a Congressional Gold Medal and the Thanks of Congress.

But there were postwar controversies. Perry was in the Mediterranean during the Second Barbary War and became engaged in an argument which led to Perry slapping a Marine officer, John Heath. Both were court-martialed and reprimanded, and Heath, unhappy with the outcome, challenged Perry to a duel during which he fired from four paces and missed. Perry declined to shoot and so satisfied Heath's honor.

There was also controversy surrounding Perry's dispute with Jesse Elliot, an officer Perry had superseded as commander on Lake Erie, over Elliot's actions during the war. Perry declined a duel with Elliott but instead filed court-martial charges against him. Rather than risking the spectacle of two national heroes waging a public proceeding, President James Monroe tapped Perry to lead a mission to Simon Bolivar's revolutionary government in Venezuela. Perry contracted yellow fever while there and died while enroute back to Trinidad, on August 23, 1819, his 34th birthday.

War and traveled to the Mediterranean. By 1805, he was an acting lieutenant and commanded the USS Nautilus, and then, after returning to the U.S., he received command of the USS Revenge. When the War of 1812 broke out Perry wished to see active service and badgered the Navy Department for a sea-going assignment. Unable to achieve this goal, he contacted his friend Commodore Isaac Chauncey who secured Perry a transfer to the Great Lakes and directed him to take command of a small fleet being built on Lake Erie. On September 13, 1813, Perry caught sight of a squadron on British Royal Navy vessels and brazenly ordered his men to set sail and engage the British. With a flag emblazoned with the words "Don't Give Up the Ship" Perry managed to disable and scatter most of the Royal vessels. After British surrender, Perry sent a letter to General William Henry Harrison, saying, "We have met the enemy and they are ours. Two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop."

THE GONSTEAD ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Dr. Clarence Gonstead left behind a professional legacy that is unquestionably international. His renown within the chiropractic field has spread Mount Horeb's name across the world more than any other single resident of our Village. Yet, as the years pass, his presence here is limited and waning; more and more, the wider chiropractic community is claiming Dr. Gonstead as their own.

With the Gonstead Oral History Project, the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society seeks to capture the local history and legacy of Dr. Clarence Gonstead while personal histories and first-person perspectives are yet alive in the community mind and memories. These efforts will ensure that Mount Horeb's chapter of the Gonstead story is gathered and preserved for posterity.

This important project is supported by vital funding from the Mount Horeb Community Foundation.



Project Sneak Peek

by Oral Historian, Jane Considine

The oral history project seeks to dig deeper into the life of Clarence and Elvira Gonstead. Clarence died in 1978 and Elvira in 1991. To this end I had opportunity to personally interview three chiropractors who all worked with Gonstead for many years (Dr. Ray Clinton, Dr. Alex Cox, and Dr. Douglas Cox); former patients (Saundra Roth, Kevin Tvedt); two members of Elvira Meister Gonstead's extended family (Bruce Meister and Dean Meister) a businessman (Ron Wirth) and an employee at the Karakahl and clinic who had a front row seat as the daughter of one of the clinic chiropractors (Alexis Cox), and a woman who grew up next door to the Gonsteads when they lived on Center Avenue (Shirley Martin).

Were there other people I should have talked to? Some people were reluctant to be interviewed because they felt their memories were now vague, and some thought they would have nothing to contribute. Nevertheless, the resulting oral history provides a more complete profile of Gonstead: he was also a neighbor who rarely socialized, a mentor who preferred to have his students learn by observing, an uncle and brother-in-law who enjoyed the family gatherings and wasn't assigned the role of celebrity, a generous man who gave loans and expected no more than good use of the money and eventual repayment; a chiropractor who provided relief to thousands of patients quickly and without much talk; a mercurial businessman who guarded his financial privacy and whose business practices were often unusual and seemingly stingy. Elvira Gonstead played a significant role in her husband's professional life. She cleaned the offices at the end of a long day (Gonstead and other clinicians often worked until 11 pm or later), she drove the car when he made midnight (and later) house calls, she opened at gift shop at the Karakahl that provided

a shopping experience for Karakahl guests, and she guarded her husband's business interests.

Some of the highlights of the interviews:

Dr. Ray Clinton first met Dr. Gonstead when he was a teen-ager brought to the clinic for adjustment. He was motivated to study chiropractic and when he graduated from Palmer was offered a position at the Gonstead Clinic where he worked from 1971 to 2019. He said he has never met a person more dedicated to his patients and to his profession than Gonstead. Word of mouth was the primary source for business. Gonstead was proud of the fact that he never felt a need to advertise for business: he thought successful treatment of patients was the best advertising. Clinton also said that Gonstead, who was of Norwegian descent, said that the usual eight-hour workday common for most people was like half a day for Norwegians.

Shirley Martin was a young woman when she lived next door to the Gonsteads on Center Avenue in Mount Horeb. Her family had a cordial relationship with "Vi." She remembers that her mother always reminded the children to be quiet when she heard the rumble of Dr. Gonstead's Cadillac coming down the street at mid-day when he came home for lunch and a nap. Unlike his wife, Gonstead did not seek out friendship with his neighbors: he was always very businesslike. At Christmas "Vi" would bring over a plate of her homemade rosettes, and later brought gifts for the children. Shirley recalls that "Vi" sometimes dressed flamboyantly, though at home she wore a plain housedress just like many women at the time.

Dr. Alex Cox had an established practice in Lake Geneva when Dr. Gonstead offered him a job at the clinic in Mount Horeb. He was already familiar with Gonstead's reputation and accepted the offer in 1964. But he said he didn't get a warm welcome in the village: he was denied more than one apartment rental because he wasn't of Norwegian ancestry and "went to the wrong church." He and his wife moved into the cottage adjacent to the Gonstead's large new home and were later able to find a place to rent. He was one of four chiropractors at the clinic and kept a schedule similar to Gonstead's: start at about 8 a.m., go home for lunch at midday, return to patients in the afternoon, go home for dinner, then return again to the clinic about 7 and work until 11 or midnight. He explained that he, like the other chiropractors at the clinic, was familiar with an individual patient's case and was therefore able to treat a returning patient quickly. This allowed them to each see 100 or more patients a day. He thinks that some



Drs. Alex and Douglas Cox, ca. 1978

Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

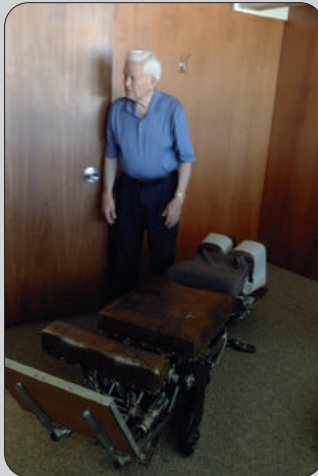
chiropractic school administrations try to stand out from other schools and attempt to promote a new “method,” hoping perhaps that they will be as successful as Clarence Gonstead was with using and teaching his method.

Dr. Douglas Cox arrived in Mount Horeb in 1967 after teaching at Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa. His brother Alex was already working at the clinic and, by this time, Gonstead was slowing down. In 1971 Gonstead offered to sell the business—including the Karakahl Inn and the thriving seminar organization—to the brothers. They agreed on a price, and thereafter the brothers were working six days a week to make payments to Gonstead. Issues related to the financing created tension between the two parties that lingered even at the time of Gonstead’s death in 1978. Still, Dr. Cox has great admiration for Gonstead’s ability as a chiropractor: he says he had seen Gonstead do things that he didn’t think were possible, and that there was nothing more important to Gonstead than making his patients happy.

Bruce Meister is the Gonstead’s nephew. He remembers seeing them when they came to family gatherings. “Uncle Clarence” drove Cadillacs that were quite an attraction for Bruce and other youngsters, but their uncle was not considered a celebrity. If there was a new baby at the gathering, Uncle Clarence would examine the child for any signs of potential problems. Bruce was devastated when Aunt Elvira succumbed in a fire at her home, and he recalls visiting the site the day after the fire, seeing for himself the extent of the damage.

Sandra Roth was treated for asthma by Dr. Gonstead when she was a pre-teen and teen. She remembers that if an asthma attack prevented her from going to the clinic, Dr. Gonstead would come to the home late at night. His treatment always provided relief, and Sandra awoke in the morning recovered. She said her two daughters (one in Texas, one in California) both seek out chiropractors who use the Gonstead method, and one of the daughters reported that her new chiropractor was astonished to hear that she was from Mount Horeb, the home of the famous Dr. Gonstead.

Kevin Tvedt moved from Mount Horeb to California right after high school but is a regular visitor to Mount Horeb. Many in the extended family were or are chiropractors. When he was in high school Tvedt was treated by Dr. Gonstead for Osgood-Schlatter syndrome that often occurs in adolescents, especially boys, when they are growing quickly. It is not a life-threatening situation but very painful and the person is often unable to straighten his/her leg. He went to see Gonstead who recognized the source of the problem and quickly adjusted the leg. Tvedt has many other stories involving Gonstead’s treatment of family members: a brother who had a severe asthma attack, a female relative who was able to carry four babies to term successfully (after two miscarriages) after Gonstead determined that her hips were out of alignment. Tvedt said that his current chiropractor (who uses the Gonstead method) told him that he (Tvedt) is “historically significant”



Above: The Gonstead home after the fire, 1991
Below: Dr. Douglas Cox in the Gonstead Clinic, 2021

because he was actually adjusted by the famous chiropractor from Mount Horeb.

Ron Wirth recalls going with his parents when he was 12 to visit Dr. Gonstead at his home to determine if he would loan them money to build a supper club. Gonstead agreed on the condition that the building would be of sound construction. The Wirths were successful with the business, Club 18: they paid back the loan in five years. Eventually they added a dancehall that became the venue for many popular live performances. The success of their business allowed them to later purchase the golf course and build a clubhouse at the site. Wirth believes that many in the community benefitted from Gonstead’s generosity, with no paper trail to document the transaction.

Dean Meister talked about his recollections of seeing Clarence and Elvira Meister Gonstead at family gatherings in the 40s and 50s, where they fit in just like all the other family members. Like Bruce Meister he recalled that Clarence examined new babies in the family and often found that the baby’s neck needed an adjustment following the birthing process. Meister also recalls that at the family gatherings Gonstead would also do a chiropractic adjustment for family members who needed one.

Alexis Cox is the daughter of Dr. Alex and the late Colleen Cox. She recalls that her father worked long hours at the clinic but the family always had breakfast and dinner together. She said she never felt that he neglected his family; they recognized that he was providing an important service to patients. She said that classmates thought her family was wealthy and there were rumors that they had a stash of gold in the basement. She believes these perceptions and rumors were based partially on the more flamboyant lifestyle of the Gonsteads and fact that the Cox family had two cars, still somewhat unusual at that time in Mount Horeb. She started working at the Karakahl first at the front desk, then in the restaurant in catering and bartending, and later in the seminar office at the clinic. She remembers Elvira Gonstead as a “powerhouse” and capable woman who liked to wear flashy jewelry, especially rings.

2020 COLLECTIONS DONORS

Thank you to the many individuals and families who donated documents and/or objects to the collections of the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society during the 2020 calendar year. The early months of COVID forced us to spend more time than we expected in our own homes. For many, that time was spent doing genealogy or going through family belongings, with the Society's collections being the ultimate beneficiary. Thank you to all who helped enrich our collections for future researchers and visitors to the Mount Horeb area.

As in previous years, if you do not see your name on this list and feel it should be, please let us know. While we try to be diligent in our attention to detail, oversights during our multi-staged approval-cataloging-storage process are possible. Please know that we value every donation made to the Society's collections. -*Curator Johanna Buysse*

Dave Alley	Janice Hiltbrand	Judy Phipps
Armstrong/McElhatton Family	Trudy Hollfelder	Susan Powers
Thomas Baden	Kate Thronson Hook	Rebecca Rehl
Mark Banczak	Children of Bernice and Andrew Hughes	Donna Read
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Dave Baumgartner	Jane Hopkins Kubler	Rebecca Boelhower Santi
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Royce and Kay Hansen	Perry Historical Center	Joshua Zimmer
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continued from pg 5... different farm, selling the original farm to Jacob Stolen. In 1920 Martin Skindrud bought it, bringing it back into the family. The farm remained in the Skindrud family, always maintained as a dairy farm, until 1992 when it was purchased by David Atwell. Atwell was instrumental in preserving the farmstead and having it designated to the National Registry.

Not unlike many farms in the driftless area, the land was sloping and erosion was a problem. The farm has the unique position as possibly the first area farm to adopt the soil conservation measures of the New Deal. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was part of President Roosevelt's economic recovery programs in the early 1930s and there were two camps near Mount Horeb. In a 1993 interview with Jerome Skindrud, son of Martin who grew up on the farm and later farmed there, he said

he and his brother Eric applied to have contour strips installed at the farm. The work was done by CCC workers, all veterans, who were camped at Stewart Park. He said his neighbors thought he had gone crazy when they first divided the fields into terraced contour strips, a practice that became common. The CCC also built two stone dams on the property, each five feet high and ten feet across, to control erosion. Many farms in the area still have these dams.

When placed on the Register of Historic Places in 1994 the farm was 235 acres and an active dairy farm. As noted, it was a well preserved example of a driftless area farm with hilly terrain, red dairy barn, and a large farmhouse. Since then much of the property has been divided into other homesteads, but the farmstead itself, now owned by TeddiAnn and Keith Sadler, is still classic Wisconsin. ●

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MEET STEVE JOHNSON



Steve Johnson made a career out of dependability and great customer service. As the meat department manager at Kalscheur's Fine Foods, Steve was a friendly and familiar presence in Mount Horeb for literally decades. This People Experience is hard to come by. The Driftless Historium counts its lucky stars that Steve

decided to share his post-retirement time with us!

Steve has been a fixture at the museum front desk since the new history center opened in 2017. He always arrives early, makes every visitor feel welcome, and never leaves until the rugs are vacuumed.

Since the Historium re-opened this spring after a COVID hiatus, with our volunteer count still not quite at full capacity, Steve has stepped up more than ever. Sometimes the back door creaks open and...it's Steve, double-checking the schedule. If he decides MHAHS staff are working too many weekend shifts, he'll quietly pencil in his name for an extra Saturday or Sunday.

....well, despite this loyalty, I do have to say that his grandkids (and the Wisconsin Badgers) reside in a special place in his heart that even Mt Horeb history can't budge. But we'll let that go. After all, his big heart is really what makes Steve ...well, Steve!

Thank you, Mr. Johnson, for your steadfast and stellar commitment to the Historical Society. Your legacy of community service—here, at the Frolic, and beyond—shines bright.

Write your own "job description" of what you do here at the Society.

I'm a volunteer at the front counter. Help take admissions, sales in the gift shop, welcome visitors, help clean and sanitize. Try to answer and direct questions.

How long have you volunteered for the Society?

4+ years

What is your favorite part of volunteering?

Meeting people, seeing people I have not seen for many years and reminiscing about Mt. Horeb and area.

Who or what got you interested?

I was looking through the Mt. Horeb Mail shortly after retiring, saw an ad for the Driftless Historium looking for volunteers. Thinking I could do that, went and checked it out, started shortly after.



Tell us about your family.

Married to Karen Laufenberg from Pine Bluff (50 years in April). We have two daughters, Jodi and Holli. Six grandchildren—4 girls, 2 boys: Morgan, 20; Kyler, 19; Alyza, 16; Madeline, 14; Anyka, 12; and Kynrk, 8. We enjoy going to their many activities.

Tell us about your education and vocational background.

Went to Mt. Horeb schools K-12, graduated Mt. Horeb High. My wife and daughters also graduated from Mt. Horeb High. Started a meat cutting apprenticeship at Kalscheur's Fine Foods. Became a meat cutter and then became the Meat Manager for half of my 41 years at Kalscheur's, the other half as General manager. Left there when ownership changed. Worked



Above: Steve at his Historium front counter post.

Above right: Steve in his Meat Department days.

Center: The Johnson Boys, circa 1958: Bob, Steve, Jim, and Bill.

Left: 2008 Frolic Parade Grand Marshals Steve Johnson and Wife Karen, in recognition of their service to this annual family festival.

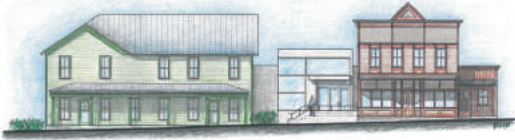
Below: Grandpa Steve and Morgan at a UW game.

at Verona Area Schools after leaving the store until retiring.

Why is the Mount Horeb area the best place on earth?

The friendly people, change of seasons, the strong school system, and Mt. Horeb is HOME!





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DRIFTLESS SEED PROJECT CULTIVATES TENDRILS OF COMMUNITY



Then, just a day later, the DSP team and guests traveled to McCarthy Park near Cottage Grove to meet up with Ho-Chunk Nation Tribal Historic

Preservation Officer Bill Quackenbush and Landscape Architect Mandy DePagter, who worked together on the Park's indigenous education sites. Park stops included a recreated Ho-Chunk encampment site and a raised garden bed (shown above left) inspired by traditional indigenous gardening methods. This field trip aligned with DSP's mission to educate the community about horticulture

The Driftless Seed Project has wrapped up a full first year — and we are so proud of this partnership effort! DSP is a collaboration of MHAHS, Mount Horeb Area Community Garden (MHACG), Back Home Farm, and Naturalist/Educator Catherine Young.



and sustainable agricultural practices, past and present.

We can't wait to see what 2022 brings for DSP!! To learn more, call 608-437-6486 or visit www.mthorebhistory.org and search "Driftless Seed Project."

On Saturday, September 25, Doug Butikofer of Back Home Farm (Blue Mounds) capably led our "Seed Saving & Storage 101" workshop and demonstration at Stewart Lake County Park. Aside from his amazing breadth of knowledge, his seedy set-up was downright artistic!