

VOVA DONALD & THE WISCONSIN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

By Brian Bigler & Ken Scott

June 2019 was the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which enshrined voting rights for women nationwide, part of a long struggle for broad societal reform that engaged local activists.

When Indiana school teacher Vona De Crow met and fell in love with John S. Donald, a student at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana, she thought her future husband was destined to become a wealthy dentist. He graduated in 1894 and went on to study at the Chicago Dental College.

However, John never practiced dentistry. In the spring of 1897, John was a 28 year old new graduate with the degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery. That same spring, his stepfather, John Jones, died at home in Springdale. Jones had gone into debt acquiring farms on either side of his property. His wife,

Pins worn by local supporters of the women's suffrage movement. MHAS Collection.

John Donald's twice-widowed mother Ellen, found herself financially unable to hold on to the three properties without help.

Putting aside his career ambitions, John instead returned to his boyhood farm in Springdale. In June of 1898 he brought Vona to Wisconsin to live in the Donald farm home, which his grandfather had built in 1859. To make their new home suitable for his well-educated bride the main floor was remodeled in the latest 1890s style and equipped with cultural amenities such as a piano and organ. Rooms were also furnished for John's mother, Ellen, as well as space for the local school teacher to board.

Exposed to city ways, and well educated about the wider world beyond the confines of the farm at the end of the nineteenth century, Vona and John were no typical regional farm couple.

Already prior to studying at Valparaiso, in 1892 after attending Madison Business College John had served as assessor of Springdale. When the couple returned to the farm he became the Town Chairman, serving from 1899 to 1902 after which he undertook a career in state politics.

Vona Donald brought her progressive ideas with her to Wisconsin and like her husband became actively involved in local, state and national causes.

When the Malone Schoolhouse was built in 1907, she aided in making it an outstanding modern rural school for its time. During WWI she helped organize and was first chairperson of the Mount Horeb Red Cross Chapter. For several years she served as a member of the Dane County Child Welfare Board. She and three other women became advisors to the court handling juvenile delinquency and Mothers' Pension cases in Dane County. This board helped to establish a juvenile detention home, which kept delinquent children out of jail, thus avoiding

(CONT. on page 4)



Vona De Crow Donald at age 19 in 1894.



WINNER of the Wisconsin Historical Society
Board of Curators **MUSEUM EXHIBIT AWARD**

See page 3 for more about this prestigious award!

Driftless Historium Hosts Special 2019 Program and Exhibit Series, "Immigrants of Wisconsin: Yesterday and Today"

Immigrants and immigration might be a hot button issue, but it is nothing new.

Throughout 2019, the Driftless Historium will explore the history and experiences of immigrants from across the world who have lived, loved and lost in Wisconsin, via a wide-ranging line-up of programs and exhibits. This series, simply titled "Immigrants of Wisconsin: Yesterday and Today," features a mix of public offerings, spanning 19th c. foreign-born settlers to current immigration issues and experiences, with the conscious goal of helping audiences see connections and recognize patterns and change over time.

On April 30, Minnesota storyteller and children's author Rose Arrowsmith DeCoux kicked off the series with a one-person performance as the relatable and hard working Swedish immigrant Delia Nilsson. Her story, based on actual diaries and historic documents, had the young and young-at-heart alike on the edge of their seats.

Then, on May 30, historian Pastor Glenn Borreson presented, "Coffin Ships: The Fateful Journey of Norwegian Immigrants to America," illustrated with historic photos and primary sources. The dramatic and tragic—but also quite common—story of his ancestors' experience sparked an intense discussion about the seemingly inevitable, and sometimes lifelong-reverberating, mental and emotional strain of the upheaval immigrants faced in the search for a new life.



Centeno (far left) guides June 22nd's attendees through a conversation that touched on messy politics and economic realities, the evolution of the Wisconsin dairy farm, and how these factors affect the day-to-day lives of increasingly wary immigrant workers and their families.



Rose Arrowsmith DeCoux, in character and costume as Swedish immigrant Delia Nilsson, wrapped up her April 30th performance with an interactive and engaging group dance celebrating Delia's decision to make a new life in America.

The Historium continued its "Immigrants of Wisconsin" theme on Saturday, June 22 with a timely screening of the documentary "Los Lecheros," a moving look at the often-undocumented migrant workers who undergird the state's integral \$43 billion per year dairy industry. The screening was followed by a wide-ranging conversation facilitated by Mariela Quesada Centeno of Dane County's Centro Hispano.

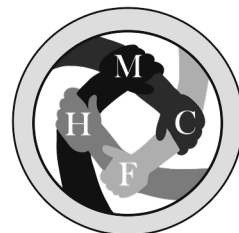
Two associated exhibits are scheduled for residencies in the

Special Exhibits Gallery. "Immigrant Journeys: ¡Llegué a Wisconsin!," will feature profiles of Wisconsin-based immigrants from South of the U.S. border and will run October 7 to 25. Immediately following, "Newest Americans: Citizens Reflect on What America Means to Them," will debut, featuring the stories and perspectives of recently naturalized United States citizens.

In addition, the Community Education Room is currently hosting a modern art installation, "No Man's Land: Paintings from the Borderlands" by UW-Madison graduate student Eva Gabriella Flynn. Flynn is the daughter of a Mexican immigrant mother and a Homeland Security prosecutor father. This installation will run through August 10, with a closing reception from 5:00 to 7:00p.m., and artist program at 5:30p.m.

The next installments in the series include July 13th's "Making of Pioneer Wisconsin: Voices of Early Settlers," a presentation and book signing by author Michael Stevens, and July 18th's look at global migration via a study of Laura Ingalls Wilder by scholar Dr. Emily Anderson.

All programs are free and open to all. See yellow flyer insert for more information. More information on specific and individual upcoming programs and exhibits will be posted as available at www.mthorebhistory.org and on the Facebook page of the Driftless Historium, or call 608-437-6486 or email mthorebhistory@mhtc.net.



wisconsin
HUMANITIES
council

Financial support for 2019's "Immigrants of Wisconsin" series was provided by the Mount Horeb Community Foundation via their admirable goal to enrich the lives of Mount Horeb area residents, with additional opportunities made possible through the Wisconsin Humanities Council.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MEET Donna Brooks!

We are oh-so-grateful that Front Desk Rock Star Donna Brooks is including us in her retirement plans!

Donna is one of our “once-a-weeker’s”—those rare and beautiful souls who give us a chunk of their precious time every week; and she often saves the day by picking up last-minute shifts, with her signature even-keeled and upbeat attitude.

Thank you, Donna, for being a part of our Front Desk Team!

Write your own “job description” of what you do at the Historium. Greet visitors, work at the admissions counter, serve ice cream, answer questions.

How long have you volunteered for the Society?

Since the Historium opened to the public in June 2017.

What is your favorite part of volunteering?

Meeting people that visit, both from faraway or near.

Who or what got you interested? I had recently retired and saw an ad for “volunteers needed.” Felt it was a great way to be connected to the community and also learn some history.

Tell us about your family. I have one daughter, Ranjana Mahnke. We have enjoyed the rural Blue Mounds area as she grew up—and considered our many animals our family, too! (Wild animals, dogs, cats, goats, horses.) Our extended family is from the Reedsburg area.

Tell us about your education and vocational background. I graduated from James Madison Memorial High School in Madison, and worked in medical billing and as a CNA for many years.

Why is the Mount Horeb area the best place on earth?
People are friendly. Always something fun to do!

Mount Horeb Area Historical Society Recognized by Wisconsin Historical Society with 2019 Exhibit Award

In May, staff received notification that the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society was the recipient of the Wisconsin Historical Society’s **2019 Museum Exhibit Award** for institutions with operating budgets exceeding \$50,000 for the Driftless Historium’s recently unveiled exhibit “Life & Change at the Edge of the Driftless.”

Each year, WHS’s governing Board of Curators recognizes individuals and organizations for meritorious work in areas relating to the WHS mission. The Board of Curators is made up of thirty-seven elected and appointed members from across the state who annually honor Wisconsin institutions in a range of categories, including Book Awards, Archives Award, Public Program Award and, this, the Museum Exhibit Award.

“Life and Change” opened in June 2018 in the Main Gallery of the Driftless Historium. It was researched, designed and executed with the ambitious goal of telling the human and natural history of the Mount Horeb area from the last Ice Age to today, using local artifacts and stories.

MHAHS Curator Johnna Buyse, who served as the exhibit’s Project Manager and penned the nomination form, stressed



the multi-talented assistance provided by flexible contractors and tireless volunteers and the expertise shared by fellow Wisconsin museum staff—including folks at the Wisconsin Historical Society—who hosted MHAHS information-seeking field trips and answered calls for advice and feedback.

The result—a professional and polished 2,000 square foot exhibit executed within a tight time frame and even tighter budget—will serve the Historium as its central educational touchstone and visitor attraction for years to come.

Google “Wisconsin Historical Society Board of Curator Awards” to learn more. Haven’t had a chance to take in this exhibit yet? View “Life and Change” any day, 10am to 4pm. Admission fee applies; Members and Veterans free.

The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

“Vona Donald,” cont. from front page)

an adverse record in childhood. In addition to all these tasks she worked for the causes of the day, including prohibition. Within this wealth of public service, she joined her fellow Wisconsinites and worked perhaps hardest for women’s suffrage, serving on the first board of directors of the League of Women Voters.

Women’s Suffrage in Wisconsin

Wisconsin was already on the cutting edge of the suffrage movement that sought ratification of the 19th Amendment. Avoiding the controversial term “suffrage,” in June 1882 a group of women met in Richland Center at the home of Laura B. James under the more palatable title of “women’s club.” At this meeting, Julia Bowen was elected president and the group became the first women’s club in the state and, secretly, Wisconsin’s first suffrage club. Their constitution spelled out their purpose as “to aid social, intellectual, and philanthropic interests.”

A few years later, newspapers would call these women “militant,” though most were mothers and housewives of prominent businessmen and professionals.

Three months after the formation of the Women’s Club, fourteen of its emboldened members went to Madison to help reorganize the Wisconsin Woman’s Suffrage Association (WWSA) in September 1882, a localized effort with roots reaching back before statehood. Among the speakers were Emma C. Bascom, wife of the president of the University of Wisconsin, the Rev. Olympia Brown of Racine, and Lucy Stone from Boston, co-founder and editor of the weekly *Women’s Journal*. Many of their husbands strongly supported the suffrage cause and also spoke at the convention. Ten years later the WWSA held its annual convention in Richland Center, which still claims to be the cradle of women’s suffrage in Wisconsin. One convention topic: higher education of women.

Regardless of this organizational feat and growing movement, suffragists faced decades of electoral defeats, strong opposition, lawsuits and harassment, with some women joining force with men in opposition to suffragist reforms. WWSA identified its strongest opponents statewide as the “German-American Alliance (which in Wisconsin represents the brewery interests)” and “State Retail Liquor Dealers (saloon-keepers).”

The location of the Donald farm in Dane County afforded Vona ready access to Madison-based organizations and politicians. Vona’s and John’s friends included the La Follettes. Robert La Follette, born in nearby Primrose, shared John’s progressive ideals and success in reaching political office.



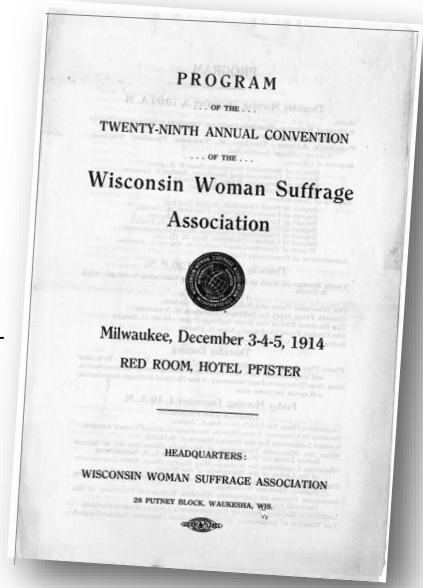
Belle Case La Follette speaks to a crowd in Blue Mounds, circa 1915. She frequently spoke about women’s suffrage on such Chautauqua circuits. Photo courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society, WHI 2415.

she toured through the area, delivering speeches to crowds in Mount Horeb and Blue Mounds.

Vona reached out through area newspapers. In September 1905, she penned an eloquent article for Brodhead’s *Wisconsin Citizen*. “Give women their freedom,” she declared, “entice all the privileges of growth and development for mind and body that men have taken, and you will find them true to all the best interest of life and country.” Encouraging others to think beyond motherhood to additional opportunities, she wrote, “let us ask for our freedom, of thought, desire, of government and action, and when we have received it let us be sure we use it in the very best and noblest manner the light of our times permit.”

In part, because of the unfailing energy and diligent effort of these remarkable regional women and others like them, on June 10, 1919, Wisconsin became the first state to ratify the 19th Amendment granting national suffrage to women.

In 1920, Vona’s college-educated daughter, Delma, turned 21 and voted. Knowing they had helped make history and proud of their success, one of the Donald women saved the gubernatorial



Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association 1914 Convention Program. Attributed to Vona Donald; Donald Family Collection, MHAHS.

Spotlight on Collections

Remembering Woodstock



By Brian Bigler



Judy Brick's handmade Woodstock-print pants.

August 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of Woodstock, the 1969 music festival that for three straight days brought temporary diversion for tens of thousands who had grown weary from wartime protests and fighting for civil rights, and who sought solace with likeminded individuals.

That same year, Judy Brick was a young photographer working for *Playboy Magazine* in Chicago. From her home at 13153 Greenleaf Street, she experienced first hand many outdoor demonstrations against the Vietnam War, listened to the advancement of civil rights on the radio and television—and became enthralled by what was taking place in a rural New York farm field.

Billed as “Woodstock,” its four organizers explored a number of venues. Finally, a 49-year-old Bethel, New York dairy farmer offered to rent a piece of his land, surrounded by the verdant Catskill Mountains, as the festival's venue.

The massive crowd, numbering more than 400,000, undaunted by rain, was entertained by numerous music greats including Arlo Guthrie, Joan Baez, Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane and many more. The event made national news.

Judy Brick viewed Woodstock as an important part of history and as a story she wanted to memorialize. After the festival's end, at a nearby store, she purchased yardage of white cotton material printed with photographic images of the crowd at Woodstock.

In one of her first attempts at sewing, Judy fashioned the material into a pair of bellbottom slacks. Her creation was so important to her it remained a keepsake even after moving to

Mount Horeb. Judy began writing for the Mount Horeb Mail in the fall of 1987, became editor in April of 1988, and submitted her resignation in September 2004. In February 2006, Judy gifted her iconic slacks to the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society as a permanent record of the days of love and peace celebrated at Woodstock all those years ago.

2nd Annual “Collectors & Collections” Open House



On April 27, eight dedicated collectors braved a spring snowstorm to show off their unique assemblages—some decades in the making! From a rainbow-hued spread of Hot Wheels displayed by 4th grader Sam McGinnity (left), to a table full of Texas arrowheads and points shared by Troy Carlson and his son (right), to featured speaker and seasoned philatelist John Pare (center), a wide variety of unique interests were on proud display. Mark your calendars for our 2020 Open House; we're already on the hunt for exhibitors!

2018 Dues-Paying Members*

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Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

2019
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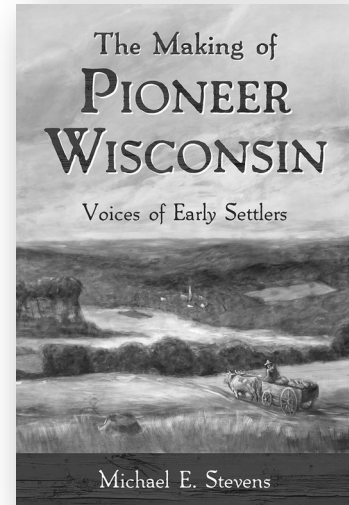
Membership dues help us offer cultural and educational programs for adults and children throughout the year, such as this June's 2nd Annual Native Art Marketplace featuring traditional Ho-Chunk song and dance by the WI Dells Singers.

INDIVIDUAL

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Kathie Zwettler	Madison, WI

CORRECTIONS *Ralph Buechner's generous 2017 donation in memory of his wife Beverly was not listed in our August list of 2018 contributions. Bob Tollund's name was spelled incorrectly within this same list. In addition, please note that Michael Marks donated "in honor" of the Brown Family of Riley, not "in horror" as so very unfortunately went to press. (Thank you, Mr. Marks, for your good humor and understanding!) We sincerely apologize for these oversights.*

Please report omissions or corrections by calling 608-437-6486 or email mthorebhistory@mhtc.net.

Members & Friends: Please accept our apologies for the recent disruption in our newsletter publication cycle. We are taking action to get back on track. Our plan moving forward includes three annual editions, compiled with the assistance of volunteers and staff, to be distributed in February, June and October. Thank you for your patience and support as we navigate this period of institutional evolution and growth.

DRIFTLESS Historium

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Mount Horeb Area Historical Society



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EXHIBITS & ART INSTALLATIONS

June 30 - Aug 10
(Community Room)
"No Man's Land: Paintings
from the Borderlands"

Aug 15-Sept 3
(Community Room)
Paintings by Joyce Sutton

Oct- Dec (Community Room)
Mount Horeb American Legion
100th Anniversary Exhibit

Oct 7-Oct 25
(Special Exhibits Gallery)
"Immigrant Journeys"

EVENTS: JULY

13 (2:00p.m.)
"Pioneer Wisconsin:
Voices of Early Settlers"
Presentation & Book Signing

15 (8:00a.m.)
Tax Credits for Historic Properties
Partners: MHAEDC & MHACC

18 (6:00p.m.)
"Laura Ingalls Wilder: Global
Migration & Midwest Sensibilities"

AUGUST

10 (5:00-7:00p.m.,
Program @ 5:30p.m.)
Flynn "No Man's Land"
Artist Reception

15 (5:00-7:00p.m.)
Historium Hosts MHACC
"Business After 5"

29 (6:00p.m.)
"Margaret's War"
Presentation & Book
Signing by Bill Stokes

SEPTEMBER

14 (11:30a.m.)
American Tail Kids' Movie
& Pizza Party with Immigration
Take-Home Packet

16 (6:30p.m.)
"Decoding the Driftless" Screening
Partners: MHPL, FOSP, Rotary Club

19 (6:00p.m.)
"Researching Your Immigrant Roots"

OCTOBER

5 (10:00a.m.-3:00p.m.)
"Troll House" Craft Stop (\$8 each)
@ Fall Village Vintage Market



Jan Feller and Joy Martinson aboard the 1912 Martinson Family surrey, Driftless Historium Mount Horeb Frolic Parade float. June 2019.

10 (6:30p.m.)
"Quilt Turndown: Stories in the Stitches"
Partner: Hands All Around Quilt Club

13 (2:00p.m.)
MHAHS Annual Meeting
Program: 100 Years of the Mount
Horeb American Legion

NOVEMBER

1 (7:00p.m.) Reservation & Fee Required
4th Annual Moonlight Gala Fundraiser
Benefitting MHVMA & MHAHS

All events take place at the Driftless Historium and are free, unless otherwise noted.
See Facebook or website for further information, or call (608) 437-6486.