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Chapter Four: Cultural Resources



Preservation of historic and cultural resources fosters a sense of pride, improves quality of life, and provides an important feeling of social and cultural continuity between the past, present, and future. Historic and cultural preservation can also provide economic benefits to property owners and communities through tourism and increases in property value.

A. Historic Overview and Resources

The Cottage Grove Area Historical Society is an invaluable resource for investigating the history of the Cottage Grove area. The following overview draws heavily upon two documents in particular that were prepared by the Historical Society: 'Cottage Grove Village About 1900' published in 2010, and 'How the Two Cottage Groves Grew' published in 2012.

The land that would become South Central Wisconsin was acquired by the federal government by treaty with the Ho-Chunk nation of Native Americans. Soon afterward the land was surveyed and made available in 40 acre parcels for sale to settlers. The current township boundary was established in 1848. By 1855 most of the land in the Town of Cottage Grove had been purchased. Settlers arrived predominantly from the Eastern United States, Ireland, Norway, and Germany. Early settlers grew crops such as wheat, later shifting mostly to dairying by 1900.

Several Native American trails traversed the township, many of which evolved into roads. Two that were prominent in the early township included an east/west trail between Madison and Milwaukee (which became Cottage Grove Road/County Highway BB), and a trail between Ft. Atkinson and Portage (part of which became Vilas Road). The intersection of those two early roads became the first settlement named Cottage Grove, which grew up around a stagecoach inn and post office. By 1877 this settlement included several homes and businesses, two churches, and a school.

The catalyst for the current Village came in 1880 when the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad began laying tracks through the center of the Town as part of a new rail route from Chicago to Minneapolis/St. Paul. The railroad constructed a depot where the tracks crossed the road currently known as Main Street/County Highway N. The depot rapidly became the hub of a new settlement, and that year the post office shifted the name Cottage Grove from the old Vilas Road post office to a new office near the depot. The previous Cottage Grove settlement was rechristened Vilas.

After the establishment of the depot, several businesses sprang up along Main Street on both the north and south side of the railroad tracks. The northern area has largely been replaced by housing but the southern portion remains as the Village's 'Old Town' area.

In 1848, William R. Taylor moved to Cottage Grove from Ohio and purchased a farm in the area that is now north of Cottage Grove Road on both sides of Main Street. According to the 'Wisconsin Magazine of History' (Vol. 2, No. 3, 1919), Taylor held many local

offices eventually becoming President of the Wisconsin Agricultural Society in 1872. By virtue of achieving that office, Taylor was nominated as the gubernatorial candidate of the Liberal Reform Party, and in 1873 Taylor was elected the twelfth Governor of Wisconsin. Taylor did not win re-election in 1875 and he retired to his farm in Cottage Grove where he lived and worked until 1905. He died at a nursing home in 1909. The Village named Governor Taylor Park in his honor.

It was not until 1924 that the Village of Cottage Grove was incorporated. At incorporation, the Village included what is now the 'Old Town' commercial area, the residential blocks on Reynolds and Clark Streets and a strip north along Main Street up to Taylor Street. The Village grew slowly; the northern boundary did not cross Cottage Grove Road until 1961.

The Seldal subdivision (located at the southeast corner of Main Street and Cottage Grove Road) in 1969 was the first large infusion of housing, followed by the Grove Heights and Crawford subdivisions in 1972 and 1977 respectively. In the 1970's Cottage Grove Road west of County Highway N began to take on its current automobile oriented commercial character with the construction of the Village Center Mall.

The Village has grown much more rapidly since 1990, with the construction of numerous residential subdivisions, the Cottage Grove Business Park (1996), the Piggly Wiggly grocery store and adjacent retail spaces (1999), and the Cottage Grove Commerce Park (2003). A 2010 annexation brought the northern boundary north of I-94.

The Wisconsin Historical Society's Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) contains data on a wide range of historic properties throughout the state. The AHI identifies seven documented structures in the Village of Cottage Grove. This list includes Flynn Hall (the Cottage Grove Town Hall) and the historic Cottage Grove Fire Station. While there are no buildings within the Village presently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the historic Gaston School qualifies for listing, and there are several older,

Photos from the Cottage Grove Area Historical Society Archives



Businesses on east side of Main Street, north of the railroad, looking north



Corner of Main and Reynolds Streets, looking north, circa 1904



View looking west along C&NW Railroad, Main St. crosses left/right in center of image



West side of S. Main St., north of Reynolds St., looking north, from postcard dated 1905

unique homes near the CTH N/railroad crossing.

The Cottage Grove Area Historical Society has several ongoing programs intended to encourage the preservation of the history and culture of the area. The headquarters is located in the historic Flynn Hall building, which served as an early Town and Village Hall. The Historical Society maintains many historic documents for the area—including photos, notebooks, news clippings, war relics, and listings of historic events. The Society produces a regular newsletter and holds monthly meetings.

B. Archaeological Sites and Resources

There are six known archaeological sites located in the Village that have been designated by the Wisconsin State Historical Society. These sites include cemeteries/burial sites, effigy mounds, and campsites/villages. All human burial sites, including cemeteries and Indian mounds, are protected under State law. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to ensure that their actions do not adversely affect archaeological sites on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Archaeological sites can be protected during the course of state agency activities if the sites have been recorded with the Office of the State Archaeologist. Under Wisconsin law, Native American burial mounds, unmarked burials, and all marked and unmarked cemeteries are protected from encroachment by any type of development. These sites are generally located on private land, and may not be viewed by the general public.

C. Cultural Resources Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The most important cultural resources in the Village are the residents who form the social fabric of the community. The following organizations work in various ways to enhance the community of Cottage Grove:

American Legion, Galvin-Struckmeyer Post #248

- meet 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm, Flynn Hall, 116 Reynolds St.
- organization of veterans committed to serving other veterans, their families, and the community
- organize annual Memorial Day ceremony among other programs and events

Boy Scouts, Troop #145

- meet Mondays, 7 to 8:30 pm, various locations

Boy Scouts, Troop #210

- meet Thursdays, 6:45 to 8 pm, Monona State Bank, 341 W. Cottage Grove Rd.

Colonial Club

- located at 301 Blankenheim Lane in Sun Prairie
- mission is to enhance the well being and independence of seniors
- serves residents of Sun Prairie, Cottage Grove, Deerfield, Marshall, and surrounding towns
- offer adult day care, senior dining options, in-home supportive services, case management, educational opportunities, and activities and trips

Cottage Grove 4H

- meets 2nd Monday of the month at Flynn Hall, 116 Reynolds St.
- focuses on experiential learning and positive youth development

Cottage Grove Area Historical Society

- monthly meetings at Flynn Hall, 116 Reynolds St.
- maintain History Room at Flynn Hall, open by appointment

and during most public meetings

- maintain historical archive and prepare special reports on local history, prepare school and community exhibits, sponsor brat stands

Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce

- meet typically at noon on 4th Thursday, various locations
- mission is to promote and create a positive economic, political, agricultural, educational, and social environment in the Cottage Grove community and to protect the business interests of its members
- participate in a number of annual events including a Wine and Craft Beer event, and a golf outing

Cottage Grove Firemen's Association

- organization supporting the Cottage Grove Volunteer Fire Department
- has organized the annual summer Firemen's Festival, which has been a community fixture since the 1930's

Cottage Grove Food Pantry

- housed at Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, 229 N. Main St.

Cottage Grove Knights of Columbus

- meets 2nd and 4th Thursday at St. Patrick's Church, 357 S. Main St.
- fraternal organization providing social and spiritual activities for members and their families
- projects include blood drives, highway clean up, pancake breakfasts, etc.

Cottage Grove Lioness Club

- meet 2nd Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm at Flynn Hall,

116 Reynolds St.

- support scholarships, food baskets, blood drives, vision screening and other programs
- sponsor area-wide garage sale, bake sale, spaghetti dinners and other events

Cottage Grove Lions Club

- meets 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 7:00 pm at Flynn Hall, 116 Reynolds St.
- sponsor blood drives, ongoing youth campaign, vision screening and other programs

Cottage Grove Optimists

- meet 4th Thursday of the month at 6:30 pm at Monona State Bank
- actively support the community and schools and provide resources to charitable, educational, and civic outreach efforts
- events and projects include Christmas in the Grove, Winterfest, Easter Egg Hunt, scholarship program, adopt-a-park, bullying awareness program

Cottage Grove Parent Teacher Organization

- group of parents working to support students and teachers at Taylor Prairie and Cottage Grove Elementary Schools

Cottage Grove Quilt Guild

- meet 4th Tuesday of the month at Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, 229 N. Main St.
- offer a different program/presentation every month

Cottage Grove Snowmobile Association

- meet 4th Tuesday of the month at Nora's, 1843 US Highway 12/18

- coordinate trail markings and provide safety training

Cottage Grove TRIAD

- promote crime prevention and safety for older adults and the entire community in collaboration with Cottage Grove Police Dept., Dane County Sheriff Dept., Deer Grove EMS, and RSVP of Dane County sponsor educational events and programs throughout the year

Dane County Bookmobile

- visits Dublin Park every Tuesday from 2 to 4 pm and Market Place Shopping Center every Tuesday from 5 to 8 pm

Deer Grove EMS Association

- provides support and fundraising for the Deer Grove EMS

Friends of the Cottage Grove Community Library

- meet 2nd Tuesday of the month as needed, 205 Yarrow Hill Road
- provides volunteers and resources to support the establishment of a library in the Cottage Grove community
- promotes literacy and education for all residents
- organize used book sales, book club, Story Hour and Book babies (with CG Park & Rec Dept.), and fund Little Free Libraries (see below)

Friends of McCarthy County Park

- provides support for 300 acre McCarthy County Park, located adjacent to northern portions of Village
- purpose of the park is to involve young people in conservation and outdoor activities

Gaston School Gallery/School Grounds Cafe

- gallery for local artists including painters, sculptors, and wood

workers housed in restored 19th C. Gaston School building

- Cafe provides venue for occasional live music events

Girl Scouts of Cottage Grove

- part of Badgerland Council

Glacial Drumlin School Parent Teacher Organization

- group of parents working to support students and teachers at Glacial Drumlin Middle School

Little Free Libraries, Cottage Grove Community Circuit

- small library boxes with take a book, leave a book policy
- currently located at Northlawn Park, RG Huston Memorial Park, Strouse Park, the Cottage Grove Park & Rec Dept. (225 Bonnie Rd.), and the Bank of Sun Prairie (419 W. Cottage Grove Rd.)

Wisconsin Rugby Club

- sponsors a number of mens and womens teams at a variety of competitive levels and the Wisconsin Rugby Club Sports Complex hosts regional and national rugby events
- the club serves as an archive for rugby history including a large collection of historic artifacts

Goal:

1. Preserve and enhance the Village's historic character and expand cultural offerings.

Objectives:

1. Maintain and enhance the character of the Village through preservation and enhancement of historic, cultural and archaeological resources.
2. Promote development of a new downtown as a cultural hub of the Village.

Policies and Programs:

1. Consider loan or grant programs through the Village CDA in support of the rehabilitation or restoration of businesses and homes in the Old Town district.
2. Support community events and programs that celebrate the culture and history of the Village.
3. Explore options for gateway and wayfinding signage to direct visitors to and around the Village.
4. Consider opportunities to support the development of a Village library.
5. Continue to prioritize development of a new downtown area through guiding the type and character of development in the area designated as Central Mixed Use on the Future Land Use map (Map 5).
6. Consider seeking opportunities to collaborate with local cultural or arts groups in pursuit of grants related to the arts and cultural amenities.

D. Cultural Resources, Programs, and Recommendations

Encourage Pursuit of Incentives for Historic Preservation

To encourage preservation projects in Cottage Grove, economic incentive programs are available to private landowners interested in protecting their properties. These incentives help offset additional costs that may be necessary to comply with other, more regulatory aspects of an historic preservation program. The primary economic incentive for historic preservation is in the form of tax credits. Property owners can apply for the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program to receive a 20 percent tax credit to rehabilitate their income-producing historic property (e.g. commercial, industrial, and rental residential properties). Preservation tax incentives are also available for buildings that the Secretary of Interior has listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In Wisconsin, owners of historic properties can claim an additional 5 percent income tax credit (ITC) from the State against the

approved costs of the rehabilitation of their building. This credit is available through the Wisconsin Supplemental Historic Preservation Credit. All work must comply with federal guidelines established in the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Historic Building Rehabilitation.

Another state-sponsored tax relief program, Historic Home Owner's Tax Credits, provides a 25 percent Wisconsin income tax credit (ITC) for the repair and rehabilitation of owner-occupied structures that either contribute to a National Register-listed historic district or that are individually listed – or eligible for listing – with the National or State Register. To qualify, rehabilitation expenditures must exceed \$10,000 and the State Historical Society must certify that the work is compatible with the historic character of the building. All applications must be made to the State's Division of Historic Preservation, where required forms and additional information can be obtained.

Encourage Pursuit of Funding for the Arts and Cultural Amenities

The Village should consider opportunities to collaborate with local arts and cultural organizations to pursue funding for appropriate projects. Examples of potential funding sources follow:

- **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) 'Our Town' Grants:** the NEA annually provides a limited number of grants between \$25,000 and \$200,000 for "creative placemaking projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and help transform them into lively, beautiful, and sustainable places." Eligible projects are those that a) seek to improve the community's quality of life, b) encourage greater creative activity, c) foster stronger community identity and sense of place, and d) revitalize economic development. Past project recipients have included performing and visual arts spaces, educational programs, and both one-time and permanent public art installations.

- **Wisconsin Arts Board - Creative Communities Grants:** this program encourages arts education and community arts develop-

ment in Wisconsin. In particular, the program provides support for projects that further the art board's goals in arts education, folk and traditional arts, and local arts. Through the direct support of specific arts projects, the art board sustains the vitality of Wisconsin culturally, educationally, and economically.

■ *Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission - Dane Arts:* is a program that supports equitable access to arts, culture, and local history activities in Dane County; opportunities for creative expression, engagement, and connection with one another; and artistic excellence. Over the course of two grant cycles per year several hundred thousand dollars from both public and private sources are awarded among approximately 150 recipients. Awards range from \$500 to several thousand dollars.