

January 16, 2019

Dear Dane County Zoning and Land Regulation Committee,

Preserving the history and legacy of the Norwegian immigrants to the Koshkonong Prairie settlement is my personal passion. I am an active member of a variety of local organizations focused on history, genealogy, and Norwegian heritage, and I am a lifelong resident of this area with deep roots on the historic Koshkonong Prairie. I am a third generation Deerfield High School graduate and I have a degree in Scandinavian Studies from UW-Madison. I feel that I would be remiss if I didn't highlight the sites located on the Prairie that are in close proximity to the Oak Park Quarry.

The Koshkonong Prairie was the largest, most influential Norwegian immigrant settlement in North America. To this day, Norwegian nationals come to visit Koshkonong to see where their emigrant relatives settled and the way their brethren shaped this region. Koshkonong was known as "Queen of the Norwegian Settlements." It was not the first Norwegian settlement in Wisconsin, but by the mid-1800's over 40% of the Norwegian immigrants to North America lived on the Koshkonong Prairie, which includes roughly Deerfield Township to the north, Christiana and Pleasant Springs townships, and the northern halves of Albion and Dunkirk Townships to the south.

The sites in Deerfield Township near the Oak Park Quarry that are of particular importance to those interested in the history of Norwegian immigrants include (in order of age):

1. **Sjur Reque house** – Sjur Reque was a pioneer Norwegian settler in Deerfield Township who filed his land patent in 1849 and completed the construction of his stone house in 1850. His house is the oldest immigrant stone house still standing in Deerfield Township and was where the first Liberty church services were held until the Liberty church building could be completed. The farm was the site of the first Deerfield festival, and it remains a well-preserved community landmark.
2. **St. Paul's Liberty Lutheran Church – The oldest Norwegian Lutheran Church building in North America.** Construction on the church began in 1851 employing techniques and materials similar to those used for the construction of the Reque house. Unlike most early Norwegian Lutheran congregations, Liberty Church was never intended to be a temporary or "starter" church building. It was intended to be the permanent home of the congregation, and was an incredibly ambitious undertaking for that time period. The land for this church was donated by Nils Gilderhus who was the first European immigrant to file a land patent on the Koshkonong Prairie (and in Deerfield Township) and he was the first blacksmith in Dane County.
3. **Liberty Schoolhouse and Liberty Tavern** – The Liberty Schoolhouse was discontinued as a school in favor of a larger building in 1928, but the older schoolhouse remains in use as a tavern on the site it has occupied since 1889. Not only is it a historical one-room schoolhouse, the tavern is also one of the first businesses in the area owned and operated for decades by a woman as the sole proprietor.
4. **Deerfield Lutheran Church Cemetery** – After the predestination controversy of the 1880s split the Liberty congregation, Deerfield Lutheran Church was founded in 1890. Its cemetery was formed on land donated by the Reque family directly across Liberty Road from the Reque house.
5. **Gangstad Round Barn** – Herman Gangstad built a round barn on his farm over 100 years ago when round barns were the state of the art for dairying. Modern automated milking equipment

rendered round barns obsolete relatively quickly, but the Gangstad round barn was repurposed and still stands. After a meticulous and herculean restoration effort by the current owners, it is the only round barn in Dane County and one of few structures of that style and condition remaining in Wisconsin.

I have personally led tours of people from as close as Stoughton and as far away as Norway to all of these sites. All are impressed with the commitment to the preservation of the structures. We are fortunate to be in an area with such rich history and an area with residents who take so much pride in sharing the stories of our forebearers.

My understanding is that the quarry plans to move its blasting north which would take it further away from Liberty Church, the round barn, and Liberty Schoolhouse. However, it is moving closer to the Reque house and Deerfield Lutheran Cemetery.

I appreciate the committee's consideration of this information when deciding whether to approve the renewal of the CUP for Oak Park Quarry.

Sincerely,

Dana Kelly

Dana Kelly
Deerfield, WI