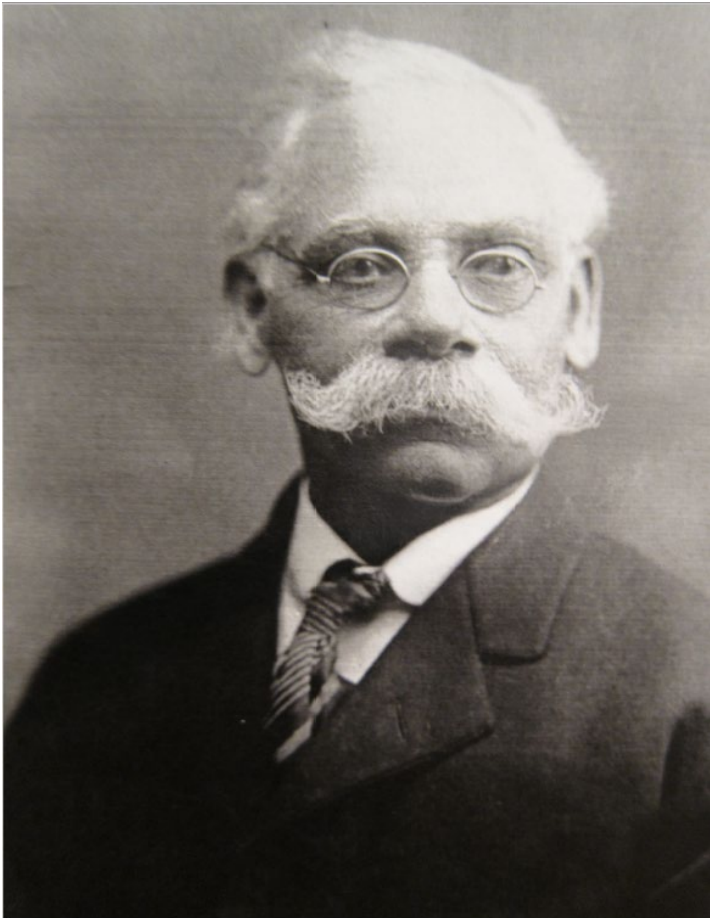


Text & Photo Considerations

Robert Valentine

- Do we want photo with the marker?



Robert Taylor Valentine (1812-1887)

In 1846, Robert Taylor Valentine, a free Black man from North Carolina, moved to the Town of Oregon with his family of six to buy federal land. Valentine's father, Shadrack, and his family of three also moved to the Town of Rutland to do the same. Notably, when the United Brethren decided to erect a new church on this spot in 1852, Valentine was one of three trustees whose names were on the deed.

Over time, Valentine purchased more land patents from the federal government from offices in Stevens Point and La Crosse. Around 1860, he moved north to join a Black farming community in the Newark Valley, Adams County, and then to the Town of Trimbelle, Pierce County. Eventually, he moved to Fayette County, Iowa, to live with his daughter and son-in-law, where he served as a minister of a local Free Will Baptist church. He is buried nearby in Pleasant Hill Cemetery, a cemetery that was predominantly for Black individuals at that time.

Dane County Heritage Preservation Commission
In Partnership with the Dane County Historical Society
2026

(Back of sign)

Robert Taylor Valentine's Family Joined the Union Army

Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation allowed Black men to join the Union Army and Navy. Valentine's sons, Shadrack and John J., his younger brother, Julius, and son-in-law, Jesse Epps, all enlisted, perhaps inspired by the Valentine's 18th-century ancestor, Isham, who fought for three years as a patriot in the Revolutionary War.

Shadrack Valentine served in the 102nd US Colored Infantry (USCI); John J. Valentine the 17th USCI; Julius Valentine the 29th USCI; and Jesse Epps the 28th USCI. Shadrack Valentine succumbed to typhoid fever, November 1, 1864, at Camp Casey, VA, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. The others survived the war. About 200,000 Black men, 10% of the Union's armed forces, fought for the Union. In his 1864 re-election campaign, Lincoln said, "Abandon all the posts now possessed by Black men, surrender all these advantages to the enemy, and we would be compelled to abandon the war in three weeks."

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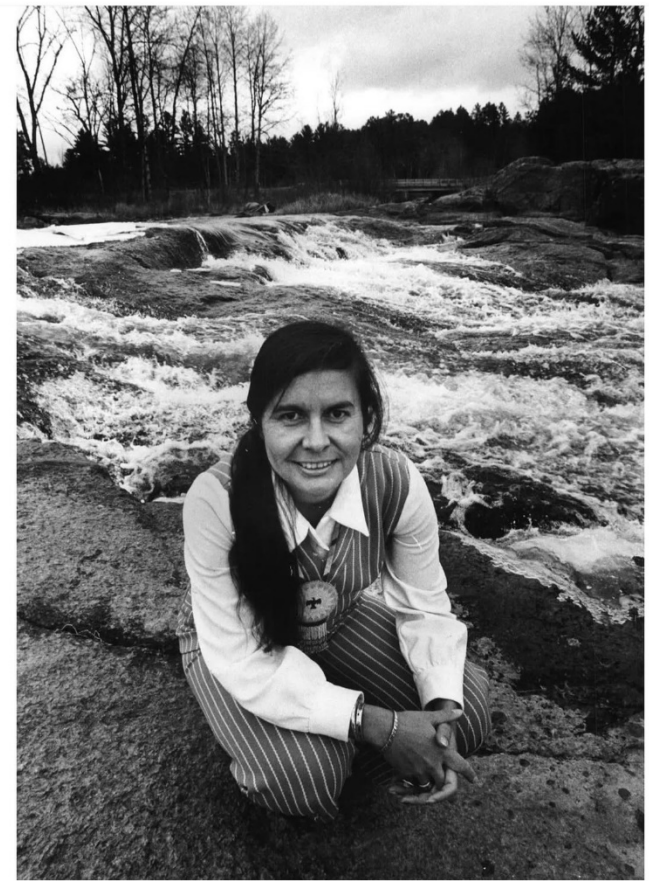
Harry Whitehorse

- If photo doesn't fit on face,
should we pay for photo off sign?



Ada Deer

- If translation doesn't work, should we separate language to front and back in order to fit a photo/s?



Ada Deer Home

August 7, 1935 - August 15, 2023

From 1978 to her death in 2023, Ada Deer lived in the house on this property. Ada was born on the Menominee Reservation. Her mother, Constance Wood Deer, was a nurse from a Philadelphia Quaker family. Her father, Joe Deer, a Menominee, worked in the tribe's lumber mill. In the 1950s, Ada's mother vigilantly fought federal efforts to terminate the Menominee's sovereign status. Nevertheless, Congress passed the Menominee Termination Act in 1954 to terminate the tribe's sovereignty.

In 1970, Ada helped organize "DRUMS" (Determination of Rights and Unity for Menominee Shareholders). As a lobbyist, she secured the support of Wisconsin Senators Gaylord Nelson and William Proxmire to restore the Menominee tribe's sovereignty and in 1973, the Menominee, the first tribe terminated, became the first restored, thus ending the termination era.

In 1974, Deer became the first woman to chair the Menominee Nation, and in 1993, she became the first Native American to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Vandenburg Heights

Truax Air Force Base and Vandenburg Heights

Truax Air Force Base was activated in 1952 during the Korean War by the newly formed U.S. Air Force. The Capehart Act of 1955 authorized the federal government's construction of housing near military bases to ease a nationwide housing shortage, including for military personnel. Sun Prairie was selected to provide housing for Truax and, in the [City](#), Capehart housing served non-white families and was assigned based on rank and family size, not race, at a time when most housing remained segregated. A 1960s Madison NAACP study found that up to 80% of the region's housing was inaccessible to Black Americans due to racial restrictions on properties, zoning, and exclusionary real-estate practices. Completed in 1963, Vandenburg Heights included 280 housing units for 170 airmen, 110 officers, and their families. Census data and personal accounts indicate this development brought a significant influx of residents and marked the first substantial arrival of non-white Americans to Sun Prairie.

Vandenburg Today

Truax Field was deactivated as an active U.S. Air Force Base in 1968, though the federal government did not fully divest its land holdings in Sun Prairie until 1991. The Federal Government offered to sell the City of Sun Prairie 42 single-family homes, 68 duplex units, and a maintenance building. The City purchased the properties to preserve affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households. The single-family homes were sold through a lottery at below-market prices. The City sold the duplex buildings to a third party that now rents the units, while retaining ownership of the land beneath them. Although the original development agreement envisioned a program allowing duplex tenants to purchase their homes, such a program was never created. As of 2026, the third party pays annual rent to the City, and continued public ownership of the land remains central to maintaining the long-term affordability of these homes.

Vandenburg Heights

- Do we want to pay for photo off the sign?
 - If so, what photo?





← From WHS