



Mount Vernon Forest of Fame

Wisconsin Historical Society, WHI(X3)38167 (c.1933)

The Mount Vernon Forest of Fame

Dane County

There is a Forest of Fame in Mount Vernon in Dane County near Highway 92. Appropriately enough, a group of elm seedlings brought from George Washington's Mount Vernon in Virginia (for which the Dane County settlement was named) were the first trees planted there to celebrate Arbor Day in 1916. The people of the neighborhood gathered for the ceremony and listened to an address marking the occasion by the Hon. John Sweet Donald, then secretary of state for Wisconsin, who started the forest.

Donald, called a "friend to man and nature," was also a professor of agricultural economics at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. His dream was to restore a field he had bought in the small village to the beautiful forest it had once been. Over the years he planted trees from the birthplaces of former

presidents of the United States, famous generals of the world, and personages associated with religion, science, music, agriculture and commerce. Inscriptions were painted on boards mounted in concrete near each tree.

Among the trees, besides those from Washington's home, were elms planted to honor Robert La Follette, Woodrow Wilson, and Wisconsin governors W. D. Hoard, Lucius Fairchild, Cadwallader Washburn and Leonard J. Farwell; an elm from Abraham Lincoln's farm in Hodgeville, Kentucky; and the Liberty Tree, from Blue Mounds, Wisconsin, in memory of Wilhelm Tell.

Excerpted from *Every Root an Anchor: Wisconsin's Famous and Historic Trees* by R. Bruce Allison
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