



Members of the Harris/Piehl Family Enjoying Spring Flowers
(Photo from the Piehl Family Collection)

Be a Historian in Spring

- Think like a historian as you walk the trails.

Natural History Changes

- Find things in nature that have changed in the same way over the years. (Seasonal changes, growth of trees, ecological succession, etc.)

Effects of Hunters, Gatherers and Settlers

- Find plants or animals that would have been useful to hunters and gatherers who came through this area.
- Find things that have changed because people made choices. (Railroads, roads, buildings, land use, etc.)
- How did the building of the railroad affect land use in the area? Look at early plat books that show land owned by railroads. Look at a map called "Lumbering Epoch – Railroads of Taylor County Wisconsin" produced by R. P. Rusch. Where and why were early railroads built?
- Imagine that you were a logger in early Taylor County. You were cutting down the trees on this land. What did you need to know about spring floods in order to do your job well?

- Who were early land agents that advertised the land and brought European settlers to the area? Learn about Joseph Brucker.
- What languages were spoken by the hunters and gatherers and early settlers? How did the differences in languages and cultures affect what happened through the years? What languages were spoken by the people who settled the land in Section 28?
- What means of communication were used among early people in the area?
- Stop at Bench U under the big Red Oak. That tree was quite small a hundred years ago. How has it changed? What is still the same about it? Look at Allman Street. Is the street where school buses drive today like the road that went past the tree a century ago? Pretend you are seeing a movie in your mind about what has happened in that spot over many years. When was it an Indian trail? What did it look like to the surveyors who were measuring the land? What happened when it was a logging road? What did the Hemlock, White Pine, and Yellow Birch growing here look like?
- All of the land on which the schools and the Kuse farm and some neighbors' property are located was once part of two 80-acre homesteads. Think about the changes that took place and why they happened. Imagine that it is 1874. You are Lawrence or Christine Johnson or one of their children, Carrie, age 4, Peter, age 2, and tiny baby Tom living on this land. Your one room log cabin stood in a forest clearing on the hill just east of Bench Q. Imagine living there in spring of that year. What would it have been like? How can you find out?
- How and when were stumps and rocks cleared from this land so that it could be farmed? What kind of farm machinery was used? What crops were grown?
- What did the road look like when farmers hauled their cream to the "World's Largest Patron Hauling Creamery" in Medford? What vehicles were used?
- Who used the road when there was a large fox fur farm on the northwest end?
- When did the first cars travel along the road? What did they look like? How did the road need to be changed?
- How did school children travel along this road before there were school buses?
- How did spring weather affect the people who used the road over the years?
- What happened in the places where the schools are today?

Sources to Use

- Be a historian. Find ways to learn about the changes that have happened here, and why and how they happened. Why would you no longer see some of the

things that once were here? How did those changes affect the way you live here today?

- Read about events that happened in Wisconsin or Taylor County history before you go. Then walk to places along the trails where things like those in the history books you read took place. Use the QR codes at some of the benches to read documents or look at pictures on the website that will help you see what was here. How will you decide which sources will be most useful or accurate?
- If you could walk these trails with someone who had lived long ago, what questions would you want to ask him or her?
- Talk to older people in your family to learn what they or your ancestors were doing many years ago when some of the events in Wisconsin or local history happened. How did those events change their lives? What happened on the land where you live?
- Read back issues of Medford newspapers to find more information.
- Centennial books written when towns or businesses were a hundred years old can tell about the people and places that were here. Learn about the Billings, Johnson, Harris, Danielson, and Kuse families who were early settlers.
- Use what you learned about history on this trail to help you learn about your own home or neighborhood.

Books and Articles

Latton, A. 1947. Reminiscences and anecdotes of early Taylor County. Medford, Wisconsin: Self published.

Ruesch, G., (2011). Taylor County Logging and Lumbering, Section II. In Kalmon S. *Our Home Taylor County, Wisconsin*. Medford, WI: (Privately printed).