



Photograph of Medford Area in the Early 1900's

History

- Think like a historian as you walk the trails.
- 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?
- Find things in nature that have changed in the same way over the years. (Seasonal changes, growth of trees, ecological succession, etc.)
- Find things that have changed because people made choices. (Buildings, roads, land use, etc.)
- All of the land on which the schools, 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 winter of that year. What would it have been like? How can you find out?

- 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?
- Imagine that you were a logger in early Taylor County. You are cutting down the trees on this land. What did you need to know about ice and snow in order to do your job well?
- What tools did loggers use to harvest White Pine trees? Imagine many logging sleds traveling on the road. Oxen and horses pulled the huge loads. Where were they going? What inventions made by Medford people improved the sleds?
- Why did loggers use ice wagons? The water tanks for those wagons were filled at the river and then driven out past the place where Bench U is now. How was the water in the tanks heated? Why would loggers want to ice the roads?
- Look at the Hemlock tree near Bench W. Bark from Hemlocks was used in the Medford, Rib Lake, and Perkinstown tanneries. They were important Wisconsin industries. Huge loads of bark were hauled along Allman Avenue to the Medford tannery. Find out more about how that bark was used. Why and when did the tanneries stop working in Medford?
- 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 winter weather affect the people who used the road over the years?
- 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?

- If you could walk these trails with someone who had lived long ago, what questions would you want to ask him or her?
- Use the QR codes at some of the benches to take you to a web page that will answer some of your questions or log on to <http://kuse.medford.k12.wi.us>
- 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 and Kuse families who were early settlers.
- What happened in the places where your schools are today?
- Talk to older people in your family to learn what they or your ancestors were doing 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?

Sources

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

Souvenir of the city of Medford, Wisconsin. (No Author or date). Medford, Wisconsin: *The Taylor County Star and News*. (Probably printed in the early 1900's)

Written by Dr. Loretta Kuse and Dr. Hildegard Kuse