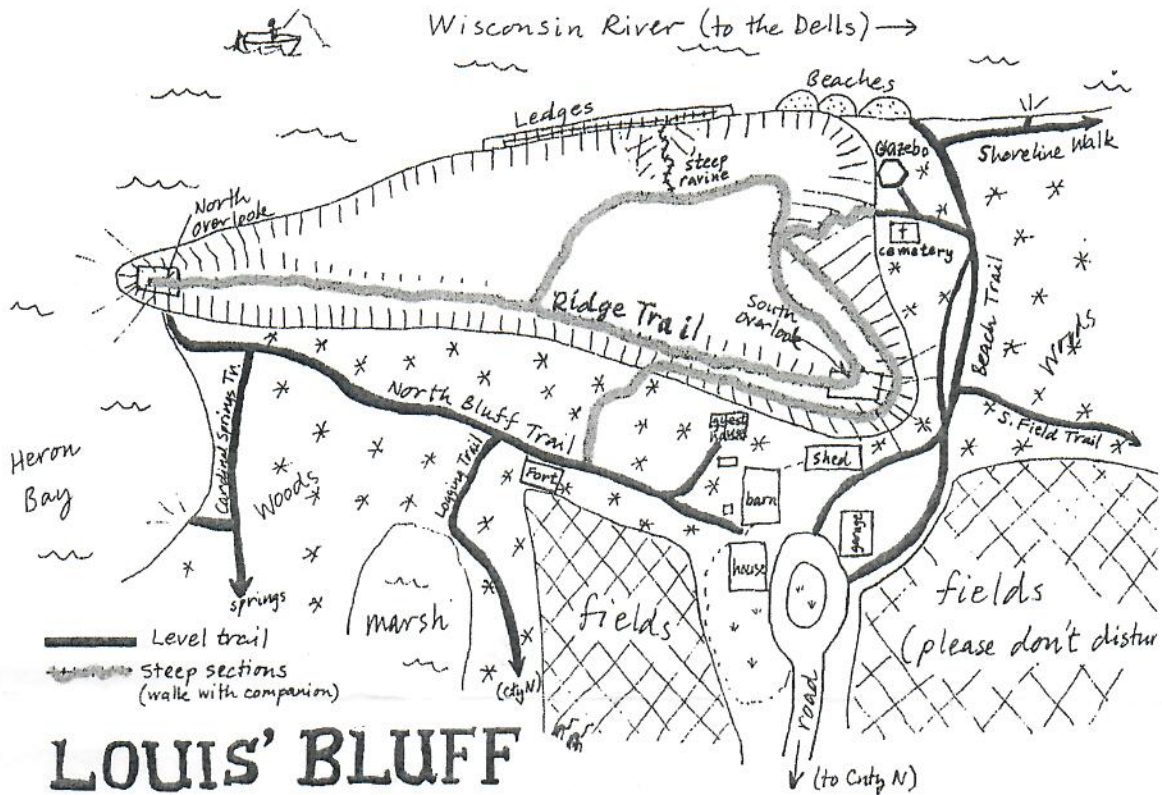


## Visitor Guide to Louis' ("Louie's") Bluff



The Louis' Bluff farm was first settled by Louis Dupless in 1847 and is probably the oldest farmstead of Juneau County. However, Indian occupation of the spirit village at *Hay-wa-kha-shunk* ("Sacred Mound") is closely associated with the ceremonial grounds at nearby Stand Rock and extends much deeper into antiquity. The two recorded archaeological sites of Lyndon township are both here.

The property encompasses about 135 acres and more than 7000 feet of Wisconsin River shoreline, including the rocky bluff, lowland woods and marsh, and the two agricultural fields (ca. 20 acres each) adjoining the driveway entrance. The site is blessed with rich historical, geological, archaeological, and botanical features.

*Please Note: The entire property is a conservation preserve protected by Natural Heritage Land Trust, not a public recreation area.*

## **Around the Farmyard**

The Red Barn (granary) has WC, washbasin, and shower facilities through the main south-facing door. (Please don't disturb the caretaker residence.)

The Guest House ("Ice House") was Amish-built in 2004 on the footprint of the former icehouse, adjacent to the smokehouse and outhouse. (Can you solve the mystery of the greenish stain on the bedroom ceiling timbers?) Please be careful on the steep stairs.

The Stone Shed is the oldest surviving structure of the original farmstead, currently used for canoe storage and the Walker brothers art shop. (Check out the creative roof restoration and bird-nest perch on the north side.)

The Old Barn Foundation and Cistern is behind the garage. It was burned to the ground in July 1948 by fireworks of a "visiting brat" from Chicago. A ceremonial sweat lodge is nearby (please don't disturb).

The Stone-Walled Path behind the stone shed is a fragment of the oldest road in Juneau County, which once led from Gates' Bridge at the Narrows (first bridge over the Wisconsin River, destroyed in high water of 1866) to Maugh's Mill at the present site of Mauston. The original Dupless cabin and spring were in the angled rocky notch at the foot of the path. (Look for nearby wild hops vines from the hops craze of the 1860s.)

## **Fort Dells Blockhouse**

This was the SE corner of *Fort Dells* amusement park, the "Wisconsin Disneyland" that was a leading Dells attraction for more than 40 years. Skilled Finnish craftsmen were brought to the Dells in the winter of 1954 to construct the chinkless cedar-log replica of old Fort Winnebago, which provided backdrop for Black Bart's gunfights, Indian Island, Old No. 9 Railroad, and other park features. The blockhouse was rescued from demolition, moved to Louis' Bluff, and dedicated in traditional Ho-Chunk ceremony in the late 1990s. The headdresses are by Jones Funmaker, former head of the Bear Clan.

## **Gator Trails and Leopold Bench Outlooks**

Nearly two miles of level footpaths ("gator trails") can be followed around the bluff and through the woods adjoining the farmyard and fields (see map). Two special riverside destinations offer Leopold benches to rest and enjoy the view. The first is off S. Shoreline Trail, looking downriver toward Sunset Cliffs and

the Upper Jaws of the Dells. The second is off the Cardinal Springs Trail, looking upriver (north) across wild rice beds toward Fox Point and the sandy lakebed of old Glacial Lake Wisconsin. This is where "Craniacs" gathered to witness the first flight of *Operation Migration*, the ultralight-led whooping crane fly-over of Louis' Bluff that led the first cohort of endangered whooping crane chicks from Necedah to Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge (Florida) in October, 2001.

### **Graveyard, Gazebo, and Beaches**

Follow the path that starts near the garden plot and leads around the south end of Louis' Bluff to the small graveyard and gazebo near the river's edge. The gravestone marks the burial site of pioneer Louis Dupless (namesake of Louis' Bluff), his first wife Elizabeth, and two of their six children, including eldest son Charles, thought to be the first white child born in Juneau County.

Three sandy beaches are accessible near the gazebo. *First beach* was an early landing site for the steamboat Apollo and the first Indian ceremonial dances, preceding opening of the Stand Rock amphitheater. *Second Beach* was said to be the traditional ceremonial washing place for tribal gatherings at Stand Rock. *Third Beach* (wade around if necessary!) borders the deep swimming pool along the east face.

### **Hiking the Bluff**

Those wishing to hike the bluff should be accompanied by an experienced trail guide. Good foot and leg cover are a must. Start either from the steep trailhead near the cemetery and gazebo, or the gentler trailhead near the fort.

Either path ascends to the high plateau that marks the old shoreline of Glacial Lake Wisconsin. The turret-like formations seen above were an island in the glacial outwash lake that once covered the central Juneau/Adams "Sand County" to a depth of about 150 feet. The lake sprawled northward over an area the size of the Great Salt Lake of Utah, trapped behind the ice dam where the glacial lobe blocked the Devil's Nose at the Baraboo Bluff near Portage. The catastrophic failure of this dam in late glacial times created the topography of the lower Wisconsin valley, including the distinctive elongate shape of Louis' Bluff, carved by the onrushing catastrophic discharge that created the Dells.

The *South Point* overlooks (from west to east) the entrance to River Bay (Gilmore Creek, once part of the Dupless farm), the Stand Rock landing, Palisades, Upper Jaws, Wisconsin Dells water tower (6 miles distant) and

Chula Vista mega-resort, Witches Gulch, Sunset Cliffs, and Holiday Shores Campground, with Elephant's Back ("Blue Mound" to locals) in the background. Look around for the rippled layer, noted in 1852 by Increase Lapham ("Archimedes of Wisconsin"), that marks the boundary between desert-like deposition and the shaley layers of underwater deposition, fossil remnants of the inland ocean that inundated the central US and made Louis' Bluff the "Santa Barbara beachfront" of the midwest in Ordovician times. The ornate sedimentary features above the rippled stratum form the highest point in the Dells, the traditional site for ritual ceremonies and the only place in the Dells region where such distinctive marine sandstone layers survive.

The *North Point* has been called "the finest feature in the Dells" and "a stupendous view...unequaled anywhere else in the Dells". In the foreground can be seen Fox Point and the multi-braided strands and sandbars of the free-flowing Wisconsin as it meets the headwaters of the Kilbourn flowage. In the background one can glimpse (from west to east) the limestone "scenic bluffs" of the Elroy-Wonewoc region, the Sheep Pasture Bluff near Mauston, the Friendship Mound near Adams-Friendship, and the terminal glacial moraines (about 4 miles to the east) that border the Briggsville and Oxford lakes region.

From the earliest days, Louis' Bluff was known as an old Indian signal station and site of unusual prehistoric interest. Ho-Chunk traditions still recall the ancient Two-Years War when tribal elders were brought up to live in two groups atop Louis' Bluff and Fox Point, while warriors fought off a prolonged siege by Chippewa enemies from the north. Don Saunders' book, "*When the Moon is a Silver Canoe*," recounts the tradition of a Sioux massacre at Louis' Bluff, which ended in the drowning of every Ho-Chunk male and long-time abandonment of the village site.

The return trip may follow the plateau-like feature near the sheer east cliff, with a view down the steep ravine to the shoreline ledges, before rejoining the main trail back down to the gazebo. The full hike requires about one hour.