

**Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Unit**

# **Stute Springs and Homestead**



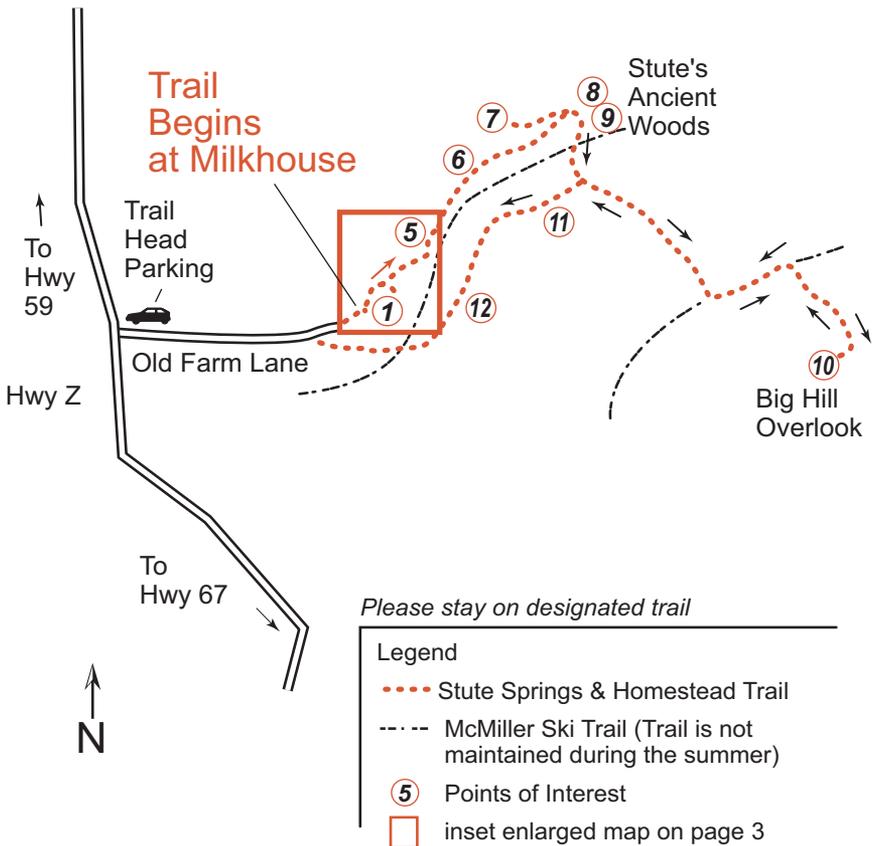
**A Self-Guiding Nature Trail about  
Farm Life in the Early 1900s.**



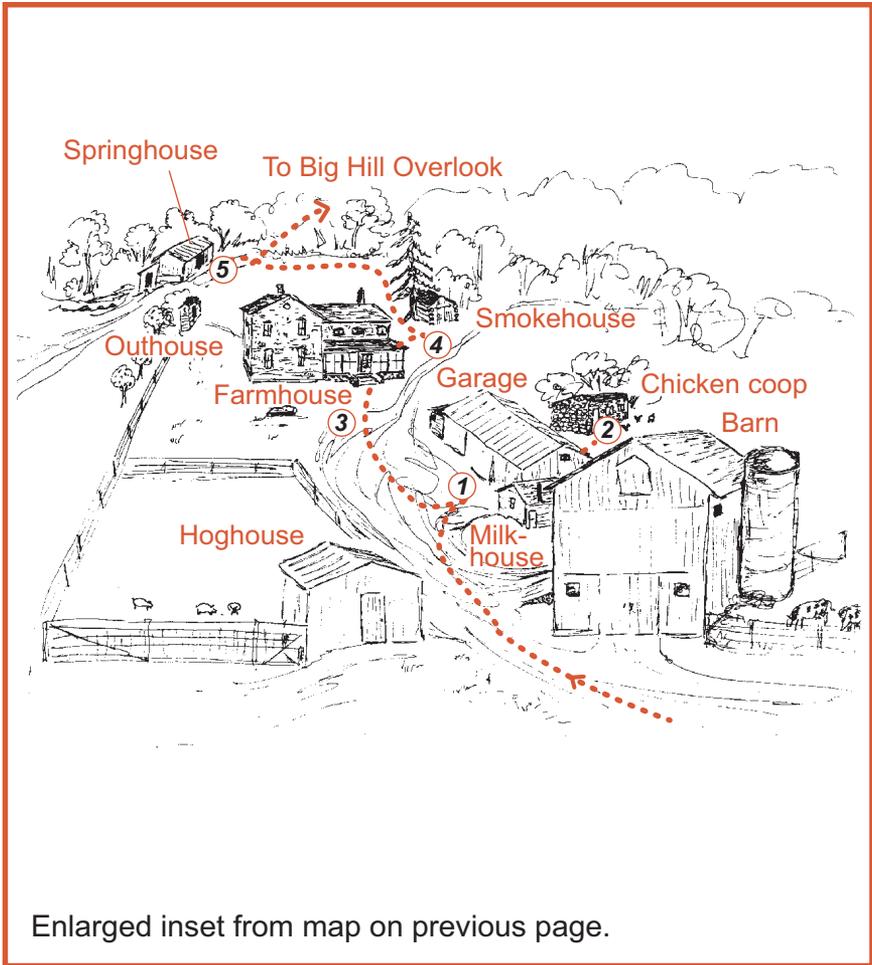
# Welcome to the Stute Springs and Homestead Trail

This old farm lane leads to the beginning of a one-mile loop trail through the former 180-acre Stute farm. Hike this trail to discover how the resourceful and frugal Stute family farmed this rugged glacial landscape in the early 1900s. The stories behind the remaining outbuildings and ruins reveal the hardships and rewards of farm life.

This brochure is keyed to numbered posts along the trail. Allow one hour to complete the trail and a bit longer if you plan on hiking up to the "Big Hill."



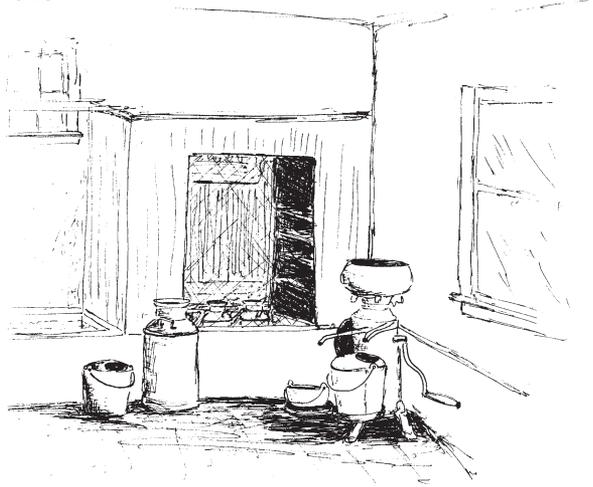
This former 180-acre farm was settled by German immigrant Anton Stute in the 1850s and remained in the family for three generations until 1943. On December 2, 1981, the State of Wisconsin/Department of Natural Resources purchased the home from the Estate of Ivy A. Welch. Today, park staff are restoring many of the outbuildings.



## 1 The Milkhouse

### Milking and Storing Milk

The Stutes stored milk here until it was picked up for shipment to Milwaukee. They milked their cows by hand, poured the milk into large cans and stored the cans in a big, open concrete tank of cold water inside this building. A hydraulic pump pumped cold water from the springhouse to the milkhouse to cool the milk quickly and keep it from spoiling.



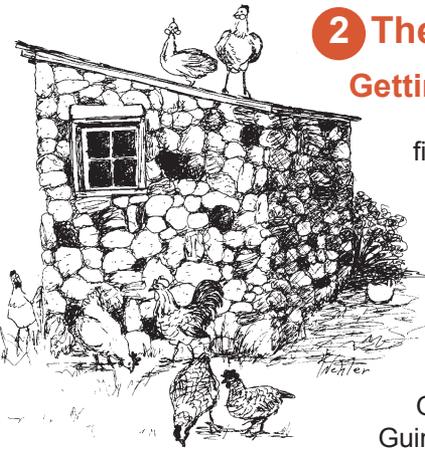
*Interior view of the milkhouse.*

## 2 The Stone Chicken Coop

### Getting Fresh Eggs and Meat

The Stute family removed fieldstones when plowing and used some of them to build small structures like this chicken coop. This elaborate coop was built in the 1920s by a relative Frank VonRueden. To keep away predators like hawks, foxes and weasels, the Stutes raised a few Guinea hens with the chickens.

Guinea hens squawked loudly if a predator came near, which warned the chickens to take cover.

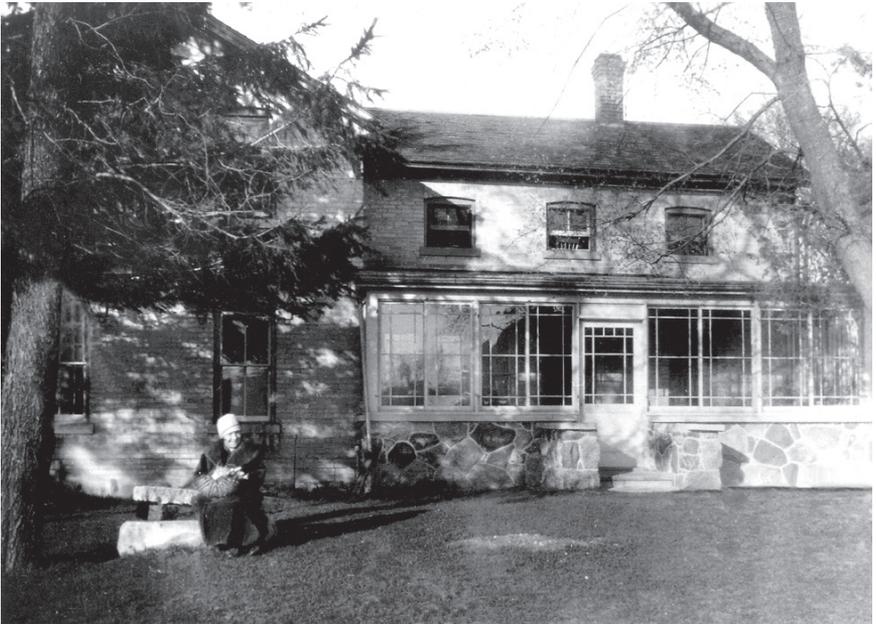


*Guinea hens standing guard at the stone coop.*

### 3 The Stute Farmhouse

#### Living Without Plumbing

Anton Stute built a log cabin here in the 1850s. It was torn down in the 1880s to make way for a more elaborate house (shown below). The house lacked many modern conveniences, such as electricity and sanitary plumbing (an outhouse served that purpose). Water was pumped by hydraulic ram from the springhouse, and firewood provided the fuel for heating and cooking. During the early 1900s, Joseph (Anton's son) and Agatha Stute owned the farm and raised seven children here.



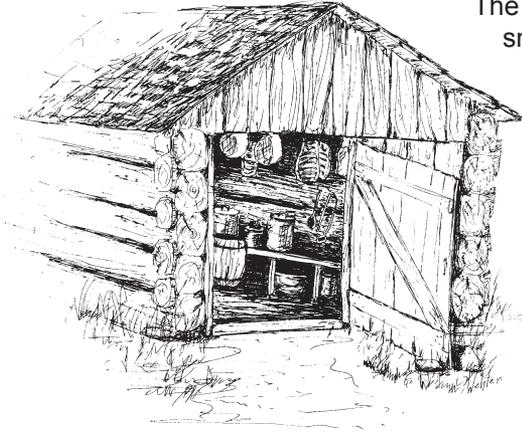
*The Stute homestead, which later was home to the Welch family, as it appeared circa 1920. In 1996, fourteen years after purchasing the property, the DNR razed the house. All that remains today is the stone wall from the front porch.*

## 4 The Log Smokehouse

### Living Without Refrigeration

The Stutes used this log smokehouse from the 1880s to the early 1940s.

Here, they smoked ham, bacon, summer sausage and other meats for one to two months. Smoking cured the meat so that it didn't require refrigeration. They used logs from the original log cabin, torn down in the 1880s, to build the smokehouse.



*A full smokehouse meant there would be ample food over the winter. This smokehouse has been restored to its original condition, thanks to a grant from the Kettle Moraine Natural History Association.*

## 5 The Springhouse

### Living Without Refrigeration

In the early 1900s, Joseph Stute built this springhouse to keep animals, leaves and debris from contaminating the fresh spring water. They pumped the cold spring water by hydraulic ram to the house, milkhouse and livestock watering troughs.

The spring also served as the Stute's "refrigerator."

Agatha Stute put her butter, milk, lard and other perishables in big heavy crocks and set them on flat stones in the cold water to keep them from spoiling.



*Agatha Stute's natural refrigerator.*

## 6 Stone Fences

### Clearing the Land of Stones

Stone fences such as this one can be found in various locations on the Stute farm. Family members used wagons and “stone boats” (see below) to remove heavy stones from fields. They used some stones for construction but threw many others along field edges where they eventually formed a fence. The fieldstone building at the end of this fence was once the machine shed. Today it serves as a trail shelter.



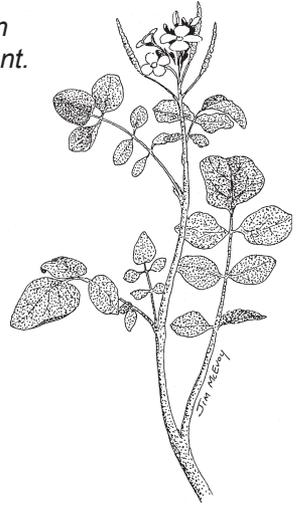
*A member of the Turner family removing a very large boulder with a stone boat, circa 1920s. The Turner family lived 2 miles north of here and were friends of the Stutes.*

## 7 Natural Springs

### Living off the Land

No doubt Anton Stute chose this site because of abundant springs. In addition to the fresh water, the Stutes harvested tasty green watercress and fished for brook trout in this small spring and stream. Marsh marigold and skunk cabbage also grow in great abundance in the damp soil surrounding these springs.

*Watercress is an edible green plant.*



*Marsh marigold has bright yellow flowers that bloom in spring. All parts of this plant may irritate the skin.*



*The vase-like flower of the skunk cabbage grows into a large plant. Its leaves and roots can be toxic if eaten.*



Pioneers learned from experience what they could and could not eat. Never touch or eat a plant that you're not sure of.

## 8 Stute's Ancient Woods

### Cutting and Hauling Trees

Several very large oak trees, some as old as 300 years, dot the Stute farm. These large oak trees are a tribute to the family's stewardship of the farm. Even though they depended heavily on wood for fuel, they cut only dead trees. They cut trees in winter and hauled them by sled to the house where a local farmer cut the logs into firewood with a gas-powered circular saw.



*The Turner family (Stutes' neighbors) hauling logs in winter, circa 1900.*

## 9 Wagon and Native American Trail

### Getting Around

This section of McMiller ski trail was laid out along an old 1850s wagon trail. Anton Stute likely used this route when he arrived in this area. Later, family members discovered many stone tools in the old field just ahead suggesting that native people also used this route, perhaps for hundreds of years. Early wagon routes often followed the foot paths of native people because they were already established and often led to water sources, like the springs you just walked by.



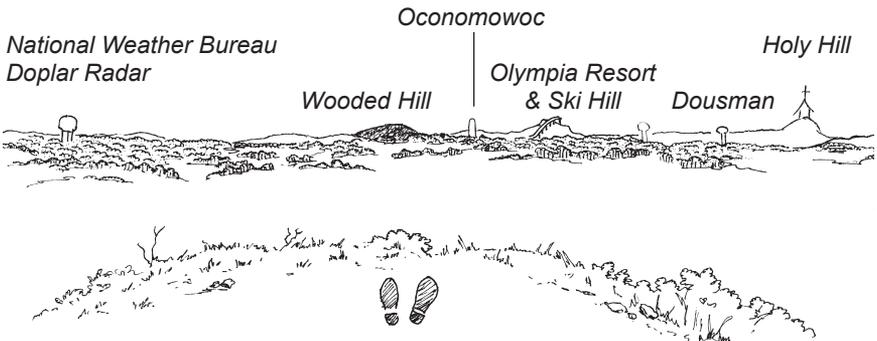
*Potawatomi lived in this area when Anton Stute arrived. According to letters from pioneers, Potawatomi trails were narrow and several inches deep due to constant use.*

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## 10 The Big Hill

### Having Fun on the Farm

Sunday was a day of rest. When friends and relatives visited, the Stute family took them to the top of “Big Hill,” as it was called by local people. With an elevation of 1050 feet, it affords an impressive view. On a very clear day, Holy Hill (1,335 feet) is visible some 30 miles away. It’s the highest point in the entire Kettle Moraine.



## 11 Cropland

### Working the Fields

The Stutes planted the relatively flat area below this ridge with corn, wheat, barley and buckwheat. They used horses to cultivate the soil and did a lot of farm work by hand. They cut and piled hay, bound and shocked grain and corn and husked corn in the fields. On threshing day, neighbors helped harvest the grain and feed it into a huge steam-driven threshing machine.



*Joseph Stute cultivating his corn to keep down weeds.*

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## 12 The Stock Shelter

### Raising Cattle for Food

The ruins of a small building stand in the shallow ravine behind this post. Joseph Stute used it to house his calves and other livestock from bad weather.



*Stute's Guernsey cows pose for a photograph. Note the lack of understory in the woods behind the animals.*

His livestock grazed in the woods, the common practice of the day. Livestock kept the woods free of most brush, but, many thorny bushes survived because cattle would not eat them.

## Thanks for Visiting

It is only a short walk back to the beginning of the trail. We hope you have enjoyed the Stute Springs and Homestead Nature Trail. To learn more about the cultural and natural history of the Kettle Moraine State Forest, check out the exhibits at the State Forest Visitor Center located on Hwy 59, 3 miles west of Eagle. The complete address and phone is:

### Visitor Center

Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Unit  
S91 W39091 Hwy 59  
Eagle, WI 53119  
Phone: (262) 594-6200

To experience the Kettle Moraine firsthand, hike another interpretive trail. Brochures are available at the trail head or at the Visitor Center.

- **Bald Bluff:** Native American and natural history theme, Cty H, halfway between La Grange and Palmyra
- **Lone Tree Bluff:** Oak opening and glacial theme, Esterly Road, north of Whitewater Lake
- **Paradise Springs:** Cultural history theme (accessible), Cty N, Northwest of Eagle
- **Rice Lake:** Wetlands theme Kettle Moraine Drive, southern section of State Forest
- **Scuppernong Springs:** Cultural history theme, Cty ZZ, south of Ottawa Lake Recreation Area
- **Stony Ridge:** Glacial geology theme, Hwy 59, State Forest Visitor Center

Help us save resources. If you no longer have use for this brochure, please return it to the brochure box at the beginning of the trail.

*This trail is dedicated to the memory of the Stute family and all of the early Kettle Moraine farmers. A special thanks to Clement Stute, Eugene and Helen (Stute) Stapleton and the Eagle Historical Society for providing information concerning the Stute Homestead. Illustrations by Helen Wehler. Photos courtesy of the Stute and Turner families.*

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