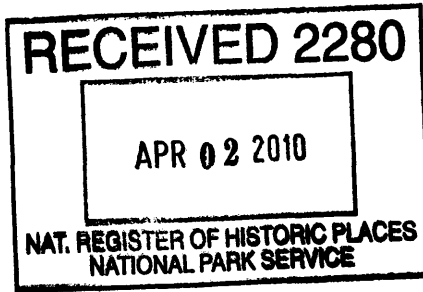


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NPS Form 10-900  
(January 1992)  
Wisconsin Word Processing Format (Approved 1/92)



OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of Interior  
National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Chute Pond Dam  
other names/site number

#### 2. Location

street & number	Chute Pond County Park, State Highway 32/64	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Town of Mountain	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI county Oconto	code 083	zip code 54149

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official/Title

3/30/10  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Chute Pond Dam | Oconto | Wisconsin  
 Name of Property | County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register.  
 \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 \_\_\_ removed from the National Register.  
 \_\_\_ other, (explain):

*Edson K. Beall*  
 Entered in  
**The National Register**  
 of  
**Historic Places**

5.17.10

*[Signature]*  
 Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
		contributing	noncontributing
private	building(s)		
X public-local	district		buildings
public-State	X structure		sites
public-Federal	site	1	structures
	object	1	objects
			0 total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
 (Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)  
 N/A

Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register  
 0

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/ waterworks	INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/ waterworks

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
No Style	Foundation Concrete walls N/A
	roof N/A
	other Wood

**Narrative Description**  
 (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

**Period of Significance**

1937-1959

**Significant Dates**

1937

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

WPA

**Narrative Statement of Significance**  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Chute Pond Dam  
Name of Property

Oconto  
County and State

Wisconsin

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property under one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 386530 4998291  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Myra Fosick Nehs Wyant	date	September 2008
organization	Mountain Historical Society	telephone	715-276-6858
street & number	PO Box 186	zip code	54149
city or town	Mountain	state	WI

Chute Pond Dam  
Name of Property

Oconto  
County and State

Wisconsin

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

<b>name/title</b>	Oconto County	<b>date</b>	September 2008
<b>organization</b>		<b>telephone</b>	920-834-6827
<b>street &amp; number</b>	301 Washington Street	<b>zip code</b>	54153
<b>city or town</b>	Oconto	<b>state</b>	WI

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

Chute Pond Dam  
Town of Mountain, Oconto County, Wisconsin

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**INTRODUCTION**

Chute Pond Dam is located on the North Branch of the Oconto River in Oconto County, five miles south of the community of Mountain. The lake created by the dam is approximately 440 acres and is used for recreation, including camping, boating, and fishing.<sup>1</sup> The original dam, which was used for log driving, was a rock filled timber crib. Elements of this earlier dam remain submerged near the present dam. The present dam was constructed by the WPA in 1937 and was built to correct and conserve the water flowage of the North Branch of the Oconto River.<sup>2</sup> According to assessment reports, seepage repairs were made in 1938 and concrete repairs were made in 1977 and 1978. Repairs to the embankment and emergency spillway, along with minor concrete repairs, were made in 1993.<sup>3</sup> Repairs were again made in 2008.

**DESCRIPTION**

Chute Pond is located on the North Branch of the Oconto River. The Oconto River and its tributaries are a major water resource with approximately two-thirds of the county situated in the Oconto River Watershed.<sup>4</sup> The site where the dam is located is a tranquil forested area where the only sounds heard are the sounds of water and birds until a tourist disturbs the sounds of nature. To arrive at the dam's location, less than one mile north of the southern junction of Highways 32 and 64, one turns onto a country road that meanders along the North Branch of the Oconto River below the Chute Pond Dam to the dam site.

A recent description of the dam can be found in the 1994 Operation, Inspection, and Maintenance Plan for Chute Dam:

The dam is constructed on a sound granite foundation and consists of a concrete gravity spillway flanked on each end by earth embankments, and an emergency spillway located about 1000 feet from the main dam. The spillway is about 90 feet long with five bays separated by concrete piers. The three center bays are each eight feet long and contain 4' by 8' timber gates. The two end bays are overflow sections, each 25.5 feet long. The crest of the spillway is at

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<sup>1</sup> Operation, Inspection, and Maintenance Plan for Chute Dam, Forests, Parks, & Recreation Department A Division of Land & Water Resources, Oconto County, 1994, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Oconto County Reporter, "Dam at Chute Pond is Nearly Completed Now," May 13, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> Ayres Associates, Chute Dam Inspection Report and Design Analysis Prepared for Oconto County, 1991, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Oconto County Court House, Draft—Oconto County Recreation Plan—Draft for Review by the Forestry, Parks, and Recreation Committee, July 19, 1999, p. 8.

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Chute Pond Dam

Section 7 Page 2

Town of Mountain, Oconto County, Wisconsin

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elevation 866.0 at the gates and 870.0 at the overflow sections. The embankments are approximately 200 feet long on the right and 50 feet long on the left.<sup>5</sup>

An earlier description of the dam was given in a letter dated February 6, 1937, with one set of plans sent to WPA, a second set sent to the army engineer and a third set retained at the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin.<sup>6</sup> A letter from the Public Service Commission in 1937 describes the dam as follows:

The dam consists of reinforcing concrete, gravity type. It contains 2 spillways at elevation 870.0' and 25.5' long. One spillway is located at each end of the dam. At the center of the dam there are located 3 wide stop log gates. The sill elevation of each gate is at 866.0'. The concrete walkway is constructed over the dam at elevation 876.0. The concrete core wall extends to the right end of the dam flanked by an earth fill covered with heavy riprap. The left end of the dam extends to the natural rock ledge.<sup>7</sup>

If the description of the dam in 1994 is compared to the 1937 description the two descriptions are the same. Cyclopean concrete was used to construct the piers. The mass for stability is provided by six to twelve inch stones being cast into concrete. This method allows the minimum amount of concrete needed to construct the dam.<sup>8</sup>

Located at the top of the dam is a metal frame that is used to operate the wooden gates at the spillway. A railing runs across the length of the superstructure providing access from one side of the river to the other. The metal frame and the railing are visible in historic photos of the dam and appear to be unchanged.

Located approximately 1000 feet south of the main structure of the dam is the emergency spillway. This structure is not included in this study. This emergency spillway was constructed around 1960.<sup>9</sup> An earth embankment contains a 3.5-foot by 6-foot corrugated metal arch pipe. This culvert (pipe)

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<sup>5</sup> Oconto County Court House, Oconto County Emergency Action Plan, Forest, Parks, and Recreation Department, A Division of Land and Water Resources, Prepared by Ayres Associates, 1994, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Federal Records Works Project Administration Wisconsin Division, WPA Project Card File Records, 1936-1942, Letter Dated February 6, 1937, From the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>7</sup> Federal Records Works Project Administration Wisconsin Division, WPA Project Card File Records, 1936-1942, Letter Dated August 24, 1937, From the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>8</sup> Ayres Associates, Chute Dam Inspection Report and Design Analysis Prepared for Oconto County, 1991, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> Federal Records Works Project Administration Wisconsin Division, WPA Project Card File Records, 1936-1942, Letter Dated July 6, 1960, From the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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Chute Pond Dam  
Town of Mountain, Oconto County, Wisconsin

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provides flow to a small waterfall at the campground downstream. The embankment that contains the culvert is about 4-feet high and 300-feet long.<sup>10</sup>

In August to September 2008, repairs were made to the dam. The outer surface of the dividing piers was removed, and the area was resurfaced. The result was a change from a more rounded pier to one of more rectilinear profile at the downriver side of the dam. The remainder of the dam, including the dam structure itself, its wing walls, gates, and superstructure remain unchanged from the historic period. It is believed that the greater historic integrity of the structure has not been affected by any of the repair work done since its construction by the WPA in 1937.

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<sup>10</sup> Oconto County Court House, Oconto County Emergency Action Plan, Forest, Parks, and Recreation Department, A Division of Land and Water Resources, Prepared by Ayres Associates, 1994, p. 1.



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**National Register of Historic Places  
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Section 8 Page 1

Chute Pond Dam  
Town of Mountain, Oconto County, Wisconsin

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: SUMMARY**

The Chute Pond Dam, through its importance to local tourism, is significant at the local level under Criterion A. Chute Pond Dam was built in 1937 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) on the site of an old wooden dam that had been constructed in 1857. The wooden dam had been constructed to facilitate the floating of logs down the North Branch of the Oconto River. The new dam led to increased recreational facilities in the region, thereby fostering a new economy based on tourism, outdoor recreation, and leisure.

The current Chute Pond Dam creates a body of water (approximately a 440-acre lake) that is used for camping, boating, and fishing. The shoreline of Chute Pond is home to a YMCA camp, many summer homes, a public campground, and a county park. The Town of Mountain receives many tax dollars, and the local residents are provided with many jobs, because of the existence of the body of water created by the Chute Pond Dam.

The development caused by the building of the dam at Chute Pond parallels and reflects the development of a reliable alternative, tourism, to an economy that had depended on virgin timber for its livelihood.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The virgin white pine of northeastern Wisconsin was the attraction that brought the early settlers to northern Oconto County to what is now the Mountain area. A demanding market for lumber to build the cities of the east opened up the possibility of harvesting the virgin timber found along the upper Oconto River. Sawmills were built along the southern Oconto River and at the mouth of the Oconto on the Bay of Green Bay. Schooners and steamboats traveling through Lake Michigan could send the sawed lumber to Chicago and other markets. Uri Balcom, Anson and Elisha Eldred and DeVillo Holt were among the lumber barons that were involved in extracting timber from the upper Oconto.<sup>11</sup>

Because of the wilderness and few roads, the river was the route upon which timber was floated to the mills. Only pine timber was cut, as the hardwood timber would not float. The Oconto was too small a stream to drive logs without flooding dams, so dams had to be built where the water could be stopped until a pond was full. In the spring the gates were raised and the logs sluiced through the dam and driven to the mill.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Holt, William Arthur, A Wisconsin Lumberman Looks Backward. (Oconto?, Wis.: s.n., 1948), pp. 23-29, 65.

<sup>12</sup> Holt, William Arthur, A Wisconsin Lumberman Looks Backward. (Oconto?, Wis.: s.n., 1948), pp. 23-29.

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Chute Pond Dam  
Town of Mountain, Oconto County, Wisconsin

In 1853, Anson Eldred secured Merrick Murphy's interests in the lumber industry surrounding Stiles and the Oconto River. Anson Eldred was a lumberman who had come to the Oconto County area after previously operating mills and lumber yards in the Milwaukee and Chicago area.<sup>13</sup> Anson Eldred's diary lists the contracts he made with persons to have logs delivered down the Oconto River.<sup>14</sup> To help deliver these logs a dam was built about four miles south of Mountain (Chute Dam) on the North Branch of the Oconto River by Eldred and Balcom in 1857. The following winter, logs were put in as far north as five miles above Mountain,<sup>15</sup> thereby opening up the Mountain area for lumbering. The dam that Anson Eldred built was a rock-filled timber crib dam. Crews were sent in each winter to cut the timber. The pines were cut by ax and handsaws, loaded on sledges, and hauled by oxen or horses to the banks of the Oconto River. Logs were piled up on the bank to wait for the spring thaw. Then the logs were rolled into the holding ponds on the river, the temporary dams were removed and the timber was driven to the mills.<sup>16</sup>

The most important factor affecting the profits produced during early lumbering in Wisconsin was transportation. According to Empire in Pine: The Story of Lumbering in Wisconsin 1830-1900:

Other things being equal, even the poorest grades of lumber could be marketed at a good profit if cheap transportation was available, whereas the return from far better grades would not cover the cost of sending them to market under unfavorable conditions. In the early years rivers and lakes provided the cheapest and most convenient means of shipment.<sup>17</sup>

The settlers in the Mountain area depended upon the lumber industry for their livelihoods. They worked in the camps in the winter and then returned to their families in the spring to clear the lands and plant the crops that would provide them with the year's harvest. In this way the farms grew up and the town grew from supplying the necessities to a growing population.<sup>18</sup>

When the Chicago and NorthWestern Railway was extended north from Gillett in 1898, Mountain was a prosperous logging center. The 1895 census showed a population of 159. This rose to 482 in 1900, 614 in 1905, and 623 in 1910.<sup>19</sup> These were booming years for the entire town. Men found work in the lumbering camps, businesses were built, and settlers continued arriving. Attracted by the forestry

<sup>13</sup> Oconto County, Centennial Booklet, 1848-1948, Stiles.

<sup>14</sup> Klauser, Eldred, Notes from the Diary of Anson Eldred, From the files of the Oconto County Reporter.

<sup>15</sup> Holt, William Arthur, A Wisconsin Lumberman Looks Backward. (Oconto?, Wis.: s.n., 1948), p. 58.

<sup>16</sup> Holt, William Arthur, A Wisconsin Lumberman Looks Backward. (Oconto?, Wis.: s.n., 1948), p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Fries, Robert F., Empire in Pine: The Story of Lumbering in Wisconsin 1830-1900 (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1951), pp. 65-66.

<sup>18</sup> Olson, Erhardt, Mountain Memories, Mountain Centennial Book, 1889-1989, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> Wisconsin Blue Book: 1923 (Madison: State Printing Board, 1923).

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Chute Pond Dam  
Town of Mountain, Oconto County, Wisconsin

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jobs, a large contingency of Swedish settlers arrived between 1900 and 1905. During the early 1900s there were three hotels, three saloons, two stores, two garages, a blacksmith shop, a barbershop and two churches.<sup>20</sup>

With the coming of the railroad and the railroad spurs built to reach off the main line, lumbering resumed with the cutting of the hardwoods.<sup>21</sup> The Oconto newspaper noted the new options for transporting wood:

...the hauling of logs by rail instead of being driven in the streams opens a new era for the company in logging operations and removes an obstacle which has been a great annoyance to the company for years... The water problem has also always been a difficult one, at times there being too much and at others not enough.<sup>22</sup>

One lumberman recalled that, "after we started the railroad logging, the camps were larger and operated nearly all the year around, instead of in the winter only, and put in much more than the former winter camps."<sup>23</sup> The timber was transported to landing areas close to the depot and the trains ran all year long to bring the timber to the sawmills. Lumbering remained as the main source of income in the Mountain area until 1936 when the forests were depleted. The railroad spurs were then removed and lumber camps torn down.<sup>24</sup>

The last log drive down the North Branch of the Oconto River is thought to have occurred around 1910, since this is the year that the last log was sawed at the Eldred lumber mill in Stiles.<sup>25</sup> Sometime in the 1920s the dam was burned. It is commonly thought that the fire was set. During this period there were few options for employment and many fires were started deliberately so that people were able to obtain work. They were paid the sum of \$3.00 a day for fighting these fires.<sup>26</sup>

Mr. Charles Johnson was the long time supervisor of the dam at Chute Pond. He had fulfilled this function for 25 years in 1920 when the State checked water levels on the Chute.<sup>27</sup> When elevation records were taken by the state of Wisconsin on August 1, 1933, the report noted: "the dam is nearly

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<sup>20</sup> Olson, Erhardt, Mountain Memories, Mountain Centennial Book, 1889-1989, pp. 67-68.

<sup>21</sup> Olson, Erhardt, Mountain Memories, Mountain Centennial Book, 1889-1989, p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> Oconto County Enterprise, "Now Hauling Logs by Rail," January 12, 1906.

<sup>23</sup> Holt, William Arthur, A Wisconsin Lumberman Looks Backward. (Oconto?, Wis.: s.n., 1948), p. 60.

<sup>24</sup> Holt, William Arthur, A Wisconsin Lumberman Looks Backward. (Oconto?, Wis.: s.n., 1948), p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> Oconto County, Centennial Booklet, 1848-1948, Stiles.

<sup>26</sup> Rucker, Della. Collection Green Bay Archives, Personal Interview Don Holt Age 95, June 26, 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Archives Divisions of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Federal Records Works Project Administration Wisconsin Division WPA Project Card File Records 1936-1942.

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Chute Pond Dam  
Town of Mountain, Oconto County, Wisconsin

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all out; the only thing holding back the water is the debris consisting of logs and rocks.”<sup>28</sup>

As the lumber industry moved farther away, Mountain became a community of small dairy farms with many of the men finding work in lumber camps (further north) for the winter. The rocky, sandy soil and the northern climate proved too hard to make a living for many settlers. In the 1920s and the 1930s other businesses were established. Potatoes were grown and three potato warehouses were established. As many as 90 carloads of potatoes were shipped from the depot by growers in the 1920s. A cheese factory was built in 1925. Beans and cucumbers were grown and sent to packing plants. Strawberry farms were started. A broom factory was built and eventually abandoned.<sup>29</sup> The Great Depression brought more hard times to the small communities. The forest had been depleted, the economy was suffering, and the droughts of the period put additional strain on the struggling economy. The area's cutover was not conducive to lush farm fields and good crops were not produced. Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin notes: “The blame for the failure to create golden fields out of the Cutover stump lands was laid at many doors...Primary among them was the land itself. Not all the Cutover land was good for farming.”<sup>30</sup> As a result, many marginal farms were abandoned. The losses spread from individual farms to the entire region. The cutover's burned-over wasteland and abandoned farms reverted to the county, thus reducing the tax base for the town and the county. On November 13, 1933 the Nicolet National Forest was established, taking over much of the area. Currently, over 50% of the township is owned by the federal government as national forest lands.

## **HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Mountain and the Chute Pond area were destitute and under employed during the late 1920s and early 1930s. The abandoned and many times burned over areas burdened the tax rolls. One-fourth of 17 northern counties, around 2.5 million acres, were offered for tax sale in 1927.<sup>31</sup> The trees had been logged off and the lands burned and nonproductive. The area looked very bleak and desolate. The answer appeared to be the growing resort industry and reforestation.<sup>32</sup>

The New Deal, as the programs under Franklin Delano Roosevelt became known, reevaluated and

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<sup>28</sup> Federal Records Works Project Administration Wisconsin Division WPA Project Card File Records 1936-1942. Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>29</sup> Olson, Erhardt, Mountain Memories, Mountain Centennial Book, 1889-1989, pp. 86, 72, 73, 74.

<sup>30</sup> Wyatt, Barbara, Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin. Vol II (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> One Hundred Years of Wisconsin Forestry, 1904-2004. (Black Earth, WI: Trails Custom Pub., 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Wyatt, Barbara, Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin. Vol. II (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), p. 4-3.

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Chute Pond Dam  
Town of Mountain, Oconto County, Wisconsin

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extended policies toward the conservation of natural resources.<sup>33</sup> In 1933, temporary employment was found for some local people with the arrival of the Civilian Conservation Corps Camps (CCC Camps). On June 13, 1933, five or six coaches of CCC men arrived at the train station and occupied the three CCC camps in the Mountain area. The men set about reforestation, built roads, fire towers, and dams, created parks and other public works projects.<sup>34</sup> One of the county papers in 1935 reported that an additional 5,000 acres of land, in what is now the town of Mountain,<sup>35</sup> had been deeded from the county to the federal government.<sup>36</sup>

The WPA was also active in the area, and undertook the construction of the Chute Pond dam. The Works Progress Administration was established on May 6, 1935. The WPA was made responsible for the "honest, efficient, speedy, and coordinated execution of the work relief program as a whole, and for execution of that program in such manner as to move from the relief rolls to work on such projects or in private employment the maximum number of persons in the shortest time possible."<sup>37</sup>

The County of Oconto purchased around 626 acres from the Anson Eldred Company January 23, 1936. The purchase price was \$3,000, which was approximately \$4.80 per acre.<sup>38</sup> The purchase of this land opened the way for the WPA to construct the present Chute Pond Dam. In September of 1936, Oconto County through its County Surveyor started communicating with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin about the creation of plans for a new dam. These preliminary plans for the construction of the new dam, located it at the site of, and maintained the established water level of, the old dam.<sup>39</sup> Supplementary approval of the plans for the new dam was given February 6, 1937, with copies of these plans being sent to the army engineers' office and the WPA.<sup>40</sup>

The availability of federal funds for infrastructure improvements followed on the heels of growing national interest in conservation and outdoor recreation. The National Conference on Outdoor Recreation was organized in 1924 at the request of President Calvin Coolidge. The meeting of the conference in Washington, D.C., on May 22-24, 1924, drew delegates from 128 national organizations

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<sup>33</sup> Owen, A. L. Riesch, Conservation under F. D. R. (New York, N.Y.: Praeger, 1983), p. 109.

<sup>34</sup> Olson, Erhardt, Mountain Memories, Mountain Centennial Book, 1889-1989, p. 89.

<sup>35</sup> The town was previously known as the Town of Armstrong.

<sup>36</sup> The Oconto Falls Herald, "5,000 More Acres County Owned Lands Deeded to Government," July 11, 1935.

<sup>37</sup> United States. Federal Works Agency. Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Deed Recorded Oconto County Court House, March 25, 1937, Volume 157, p. 287.

<sup>39</sup> Federal Records Works Project Administration Wisconsin Division WPA Project Card 1936-1942, Letter Dated September 16, 1936. Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>40</sup> Federal Records Works Project Administration Wisconsin Division WPA Project Card 1936-1942, Letter Dated February 6, 1937. Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

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that were "interested in the promotion and development of one or more kinds of recreation, in the use of which the land, water, forest, plant, scenic or wild life resources of the United States are essential." The primary function of the conference was to assist in the formulation of a national policy which could "coordinate the activities of federal, state, county, municipal, and unofficial agencies in the field of outdoor recreation and to promote the development of the recreational resources of the country and stimulate their use."<sup>41</sup>

At the National Conference, a speaker noted:

We live in an age of lengthening leisure. This leisure is full of menace; it is likewise full of blessing. Leisure within itself is in no way related to crime, but the use of leisure may be the occasion of such crime... Let us promulgate the need for healthy bodies and clean minds by setting up playgrounds in every community and by providing great reaches of public domain to which our own people in their leisure time may turn to find health, rest, enjoyment, vision.<sup>42</sup>

The following article from one of the local papers in 1937 hints at the hopeful impact of the dam on the area:

One of the finest game fish breeding grounds in northern Wisconsin will be restored by the erection of Chute Pond Dam on the North branch of the Oconto River in the town of Armstrong, Oconto County, which is being constructed by WPA workers.

The dam is being built to correct and conserve the water flowage of the Oconto River, on the site of an old log dam which was completely washed out several years ago.

The concrete structure when completed will be 21 feet high and 150 feet in overall length, and is built to hold a head of water 14 feet in depth. The reservoir created by the dam will cover 360 acres, of which 60 acres are already cleared, and it is estimated that it will impound approximately 150,000,000 cubic feet of water.

The wide acreage of timber lands surrounding the site of the dam helps to make the location ideal for outdoor recreation. Officials of the Y.M.C.A. at Green Bay have completed plans to establish a boy's camp near the site of the dam this summer.

The work of erecting the dam and clearing the area to be flooded has provided employment

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<sup>41</sup> Organization and Program of the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation, 1924-1925 (Washington, D.C. 1925), p. 3, Forester's File, General File, 1912-30, FX 1925, RG 95. Also see U.S. Congress, Senate, National Conference on Outdoor Recreation: Proceedings of the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation . . . May 22, 23, and 24, 1924, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 1924, S. Doc. 151.

<sup>42</sup> Brumbaugh, M.C., Citizenship Values of Outdoor Recreation, In Proceedings, National Conference On Outdoor Recreation, Washington, D.C., 1924, p. 71.

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for an average of 60 men from the WPA rolls.<sup>43</sup>

The construction of the dam was started July 13, 1936.<sup>44</sup> According to the Project Card File of the WPA that was marked completed there were three groups of federal funds used in the construction of the concrete dam totaling \$41,292.<sup>45</sup> A letter in the files indicated that the Public Service Commission advised that as of August 20, 1937 the project had been completed by the WPA.<sup>46</sup>

In 1948, the Public Service Commission held a meeting at the request of Oconto County on behalf of the Township. This meeting reestablished the height of the water level on the Chute at approximately 870 feet, the water level of the original log dam (when it was at its highest level for log driving), and the water level that the WPA had used when constructing the present dam. When Anson Eldred sold the dam site to Oconto County he had retained the right to control the water level if there was no attendant at the dam location. This right he then sold to the Wisconsin Michigan Power Company. It was determined that Oconto County would maintain an attendant at the dam who would record daily the water level in the summer, and weekly the water level in the winter.<sup>47</sup>

When the WPA started building the dam at Chute Pond, the Green Bay YMCA started with its plans to locate a YMCA camp along the shores of Chute Pond. Plans were reported in the April 1, 1937 edition of the Oconto newspaper:

Tentative plans for a year-round Y.M.C.A. camp in the national Forest Preserve in Oconto County were submitted to the board of directors of the Green Bay "Y" Men's club Monday evening.<sup>48</sup>

The camp called U-Nah-Li-Ya opened the same year and it is now operated year around. Programs encompass Summer Camp, Winter Camp, Family Camp, Father-Son Camp, Father-Daughter Camp, Mother Child Camp, Maple Sugar Camp, Haunted Woods Camp, etc.<sup>49</sup> There are around 7600

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<sup>43</sup> Oconto Falls Herald, "Chute Pond Dam Project Making Progress," May 13, 1937.

<sup>44</sup> Oconto Falls Herald, "Chute Pond Dam," November 11, 1937.

<sup>45</sup> Federal Records Works Project Administration Wisconsin Division WPA Project Card File Records, 1936-1942. Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>46</sup> Federal Records Works Project Administration Wisconsin Division WPA Project Card File Records, 1936-1942 Letter Dated August 24, 1937. Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>47</sup> Paper on File Oconto County Court House, Chute Pond Dam File, Forestry Park and Recreation Department, Before the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin Hearing, June 2, 1948 at Chute Lake.

<sup>48</sup> Oconto Falls Herald, "Plan for Y.M.C.A Camp between Mountain-Suring," April 1, 1937.

<sup>49</sup> Camp U-Nah-Li-Ya, Calendar of Events, [www.campunahliya](http://www.campunahliya).

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individuals participating in these year around outdoor and indoor activities.<sup>50</sup>

The construction of the dam and the resulting lake has led to expanded recreational opportunities around the lake. The Oconto County Chute Pond park dates from the period of the new dam. The current campground has an area of 147 acres, camp sites for daily rentals, and a small area where individuals may place seasonal campers. In addition to the camp sites there are a boat launch and pier, camp store, pavilion rental, playground, mess hall, beach area, hiking trails, etc.<sup>51</sup>

The county park and the other tourist areas around the pond generate year around activities. During the summer there are lake-wide rummage and craft sales, fishing tournaments, little yellow duck races, pontoon boat parades, corn roasts, fireworks, etc. The winter activities include Fish O Rama and the snowmobile drag races. The pictures show the enthusiasm and crowds these recreational activities generate. The above activities are arranged, the individual on their own may engage in fishing and any water activity they desire.

In addition to providing increased recreational activities and revenue from tourism, the area surrounding the dam has seen a substantial increase in tax revenue. The land values during 1935-1936 of 3120 acres have been compared to the 2007 values of these same parcels. These acres are contained in 6 sections in the Town of Mountain (formerly Armstrong) that surround Chute Pond. The price Oconto County paid Anson Eldred in 1936 when they purchased his 626 acres has been used to generate the 1935-1936 price per acre (approximately \$4.80 per acre).<sup>52</sup> This places the value of the property around Chute Pond at \$14,976.00 in 1935-1936 with around 76 different owners prior to the building of the dam.

The fair market value placed upon this same area by the Town of Mountain's assessor in 2007 was \$69,618,255.00.<sup>53</sup> This value was spread over around 609 property owners. A great deal of this area is presently owned by the county or the federal government, and does not contribute to the monetary value noted above. Their value contributes to the tranquility and esthetics of the open water surrounded by majestic trees.

The first Chute Lake (Pond) Association was established in 1961 and dissolved in 1993.<sup>54</sup> The second association named Chute Lake (Pond) Inland Protection and Rehabilitation District was formed in

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<sup>50</sup> U-Nah-Li-Ya, Resident Camp Supervisor, Green Bay Division, YMCA.

<sup>51</sup> Oconto County, Welcome to Oconto County Chute Pond Campgrounds.

<sup>52</sup> Deed Recorded Oconto County Court House, March 25, 1937, Volume 157, p. 287.

<sup>53</sup> Assessment Rolls, Town of Mountain, for the year 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Articles of Incorporation Chute Lake Association, Inc. File Obtained from Department of Natural Resources, State of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.



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September of 1976. It came before the County Board for a vote as "Resolution #38 1976."<sup>55</sup> The laws governing this association are outlined in the 1995-1996 Wisconsin Statutes.<sup>56</sup>

**SIGNIFICANCE: SUMMARY**

The Chute Pond Dam is significant on the local level since it exemplifies what was envisioned by the Conservationists:

The Park Service came forward with a definite program for acquiring lands that were no longer suitable for agriculture but that, if returned to natural conditions and it within a reasonable distance of metropolitan areas, would provide a much needed recreation facility for large numbers of people...Such areas would have to be large enough to provide natural campsite spots as well as group campsites, hiking trails, swimming, and picnic facilities.<sup>57</sup>

The desolate barren area, that had been shorn of its virgin forests then burned over and abandoned since it was not fertile enough soil for agriculture, has become a place of beauty enjoyed by many. The Chute Pond Dam and its resulting lake created an area that was attractive to outdoor enthusiasts and led to the establishment of recreational areas and private camps. Tourists not only enjoy the beauty and the tranquility, they spend money. This helps support the local economy through tax dollars paid by out of town property owners, or money spent at the local businesses, thereby providing work for local residents.

Chute Pond Dam has fulfilled the purpose for which it was built. While it was being constructed it provided work for local residents that had been on relief. Now, the exceptional recreation area it created is being enjoyed by many while providing support for the local economy. This impact was set forth in the 1941 writers' project on Wisconsin:

In time the region will receive direct communal benefits from forest products, recreational resources, and the less tangible assets of watershed, wildlife cover, and natural beauty.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Oconto County Board "Resolution #38 1976", Submitted by the Agriculture and Extension Education Committee, September 28, 1976.

<sup>56</sup> *Wisconsin State Statutes 1995-1996*, Municipal Law 66.60, "Special Assessments and Charges", p. 1605 and Public Inland Waters 33.32, "Special Assessments and Special Charges," p. 820.

<sup>57</sup> Wirth, Conrad L., *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), p. 177.

<sup>58</sup> Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wisconsin, *Wisconsin: a Guide to the Badger State*, (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1941), p. 22.

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**CONCLUSION**

The Chute Pond Dam is historically significant as a major project providing not only beauty, but also economic support in the form of tourism to the community. In 1937, the county land agent D.E. Hall called it "one of the most valuable projects undertaken by the WPA in the county."<sup>59</sup> The above statement has been proven correct as shown by the increase in recreational facilities and tourism in the area that have resulted from the dam's construction. Since the dam was completed by the WPA in 1937 the dam has received routine maintenance but its overall integrity has not been compromised. There have been no structural changes, only brush removal on the banks surrounding the dam, and resurfacing of the concrete on the face of the dam. The body of water created by the Chute Pond Dam continues to be of extreme importance to the economy and beauty of the Mountain area.

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<sup>59</sup> Oconto County Reporter, "Dam at Chute Pond Is Nearly Completed," May 13, 1937.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Chute Pond Dam is located on the North Branch of the Oconto River within the confines of Chute Pond County Park. The dam and park are five miles south of Mountain in Section 25, T31N, R16E. The boundary consists of a box measuring approximately 120 feet by 80 feet drawn around the dam and its wing walls, as shown on the accompanying sketch map.

**VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary encloses the Chute Pond Dam and its embankments and excludes other resources.

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**Items a through d are the same for photos 1-3.**

Photo 1

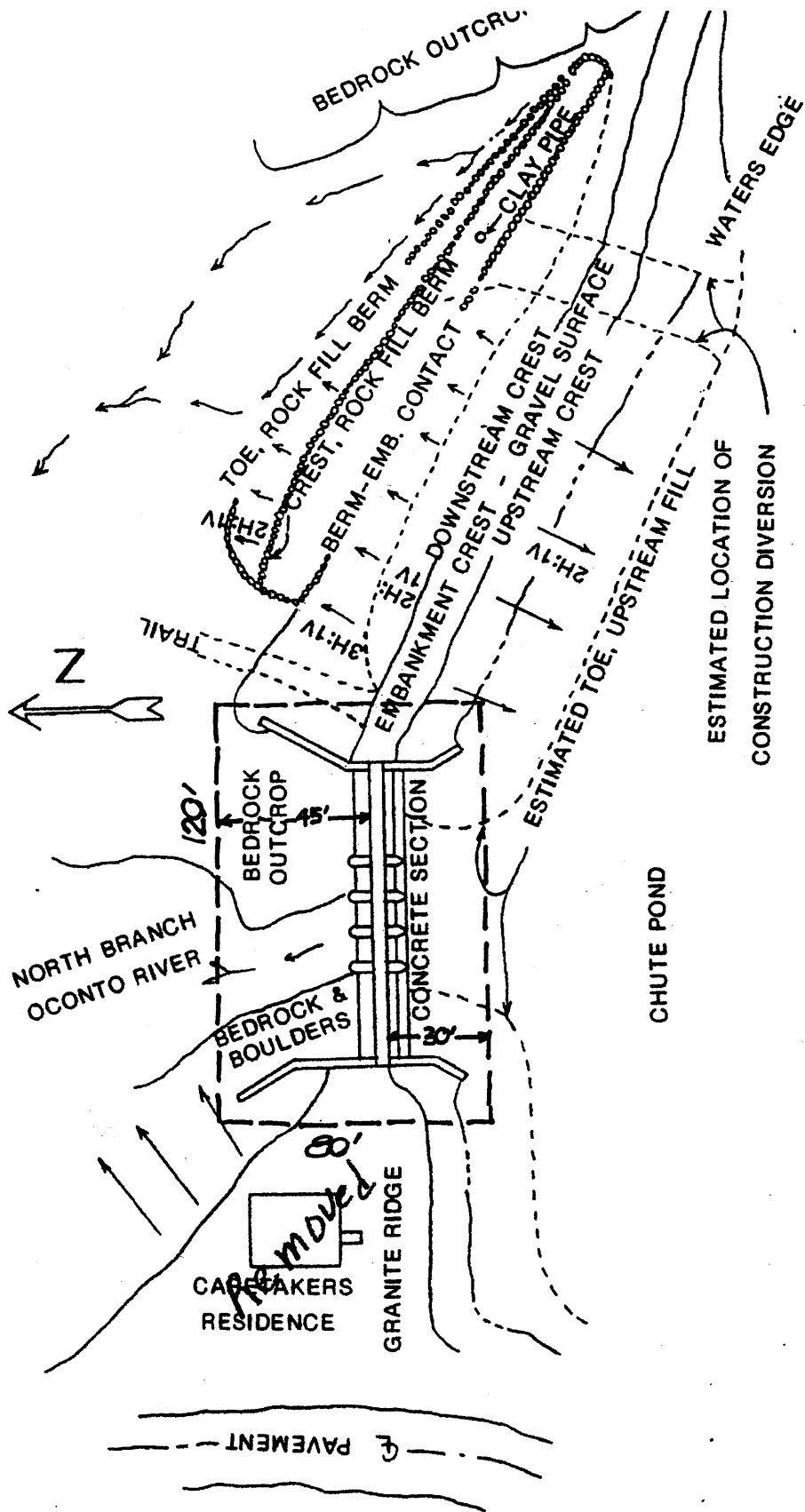
- a) Chute Pond Dam
- b) Town of Mountain, Oconto County, Wisconsin
- c) Paramount Photo Shop, Shawano, Wisconsin, July-August 2008
- d) Negative on file at Wisconsin Historical Society
- e) Downstream Façade, Looking Upstream (South)
- f) Photo 1 of 3

Photo 2

- e) Side view of Downstream Façade, Looking East
- f) Photo 2 of 3

Photo 3

- e) View of Upstream Façade and Recreation Community surrounding Chute Pond
- f) Photo 3 of 3



**FIGURE #1: CHUTE POND DAM**  
 TOWN OF MOUNTAIN  
 OCONTO COUNTY, WI

NOT TO SCALE





**FIGURE #2: CHUTE POND DAM**  
TOWN OF MOUNTAIN  
OCONTO COUNTY, WI  
HISTORIC IMAGES  
-Ca. 1940s or 1950s



**FIGURE #3: CHUTE POND DAM**  
TOWN OF MOUNTAIN  
OCONTO COUNTY, WI  
*HISTORIC IMAGE, WPA PLAQUE*  
-1937