



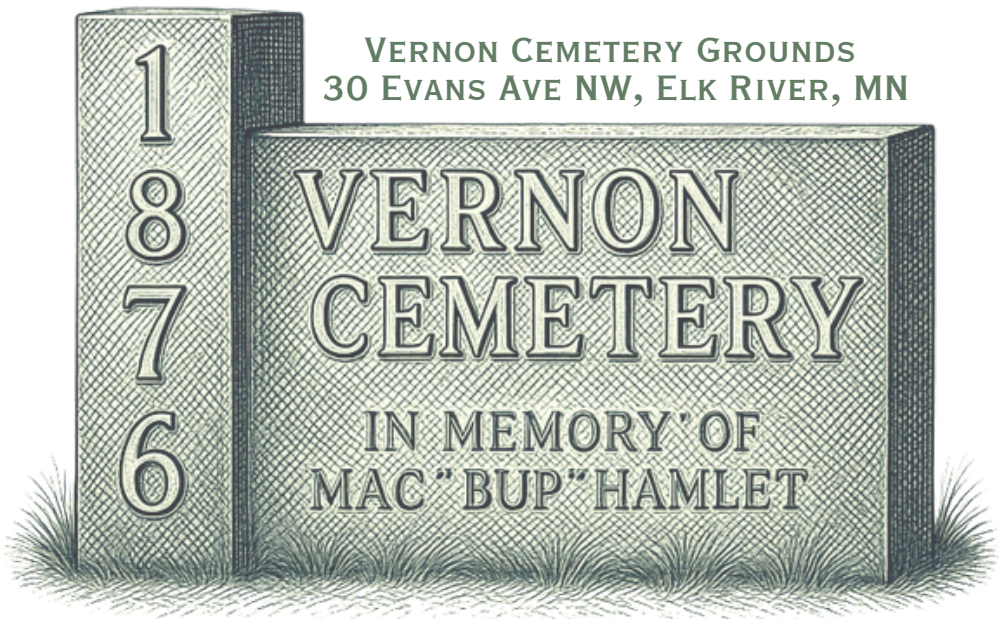
VERNON CEMETERY

150th Celebration

History Comes to Life at Vernon Cemetery

SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2026

1 P.M. - 3 P.M.



THANK YOU SPONSORS!

Sherburne
HISTORY
center

 **The Bank**
OF ELK RIVER

 **First**
Bank
Elk River


WILLIAMS DINGMANN
FAMILY FUNERAL HOMES

Dare's
Funeral and Cremation Services
Since 1894

PATRICK DWYER
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OTHER ANONYMOUS DONORS!



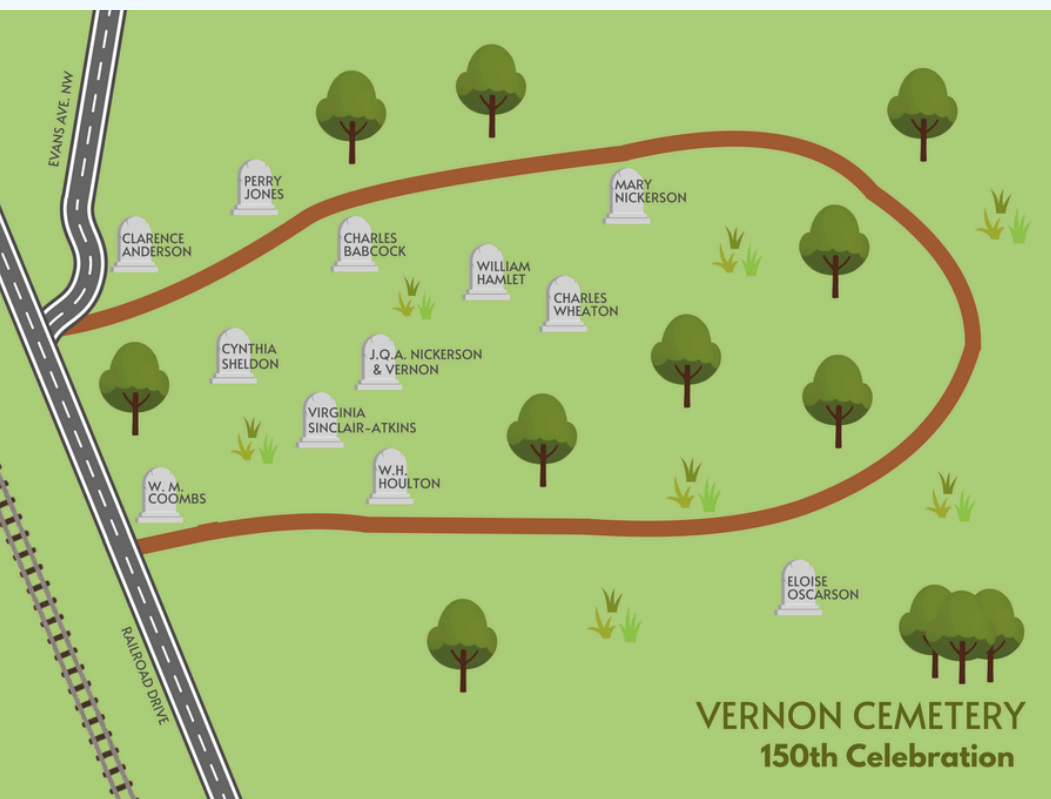
PARTICIPANTS

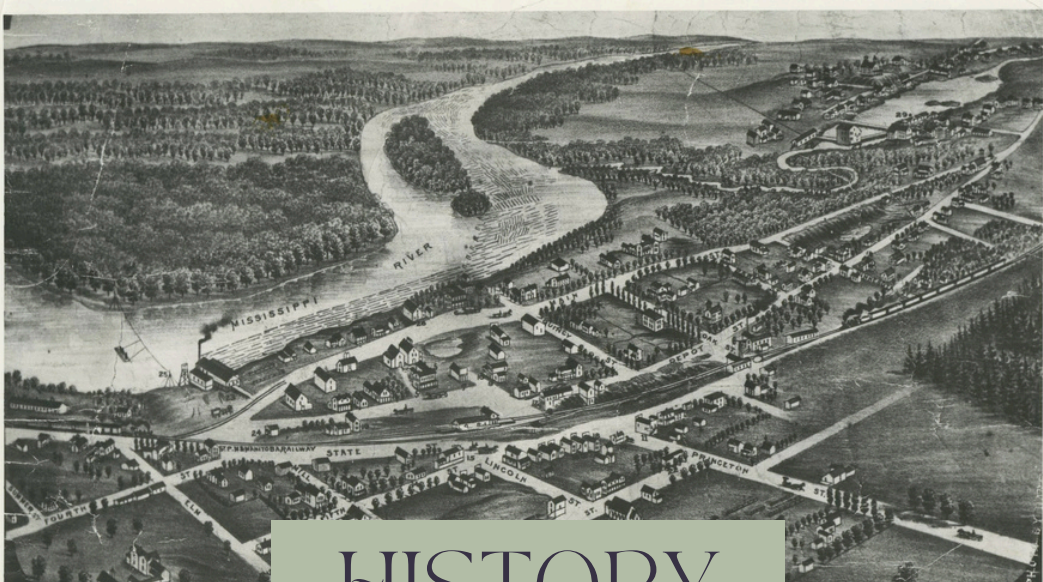
W.M. Coombs - presented by **Steve Rohlff** (Vernon Cemetery Association Board Member)
Eloise Forsythe Oscarson - presented by **Mary Jane Rohlff** (VCA Co-Secretary)
JQA Nickerson - presented by **Bob Nickerson**
Mary Nickerson - presented by **Bertie Nickerson**
Charles Babcock - presented by **John Babcock** (VCA Vice President)
W.H. Houlton - presented by **John Houlton**
Cynthia L. Sheldon - presented by **Debbie Hutton**
Henry Castle - presented by **Patrick Dwyer**
Virginia Sinclair Atkins - presented by **Andra Cekalla**

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Lynn Caswell - Vernon Cemetery Association President
Jody Birdsall - Vernon Cemetery Association Treasurer & Co-Secretary
Don & Sharon Syverud - Retired Vernon Cemetery Caretakers
Gloria Morrisette - Greeter (Friend of Vernon Cemetery)
Emma Hoard - Sherburne History Center

MAP





HISTORY

Elk River - 1879

Vernon Cemetery is located on the former John Quincy Adams Nickerson farmland. The farm used to sit on the notable bluff overlooking the Mississippi River when you head east out of Elk River. In 1876, Nickerson's two-year-old son, Vernon, drowned in the Mississippi River. Nickerson dedicated the current cemetery land to be a burial ground for his son.

Nestled in the heart of Elk River, Vernon Cemetery serves as a quiet but powerful reminder of the town's rich past. The modern city of Elk River traces its roots back to 1846 when David Fairbault established the first trading post on this fertile land where the Mississippi and Elk Rivers meet.

Incorporated in 1880, the town grew from a small agricultural and trading settlement into a thriving community, supported by sawmilling, flour milling, river transportation, the railroad, a power plant, and later, suburban development as part of the greater Twin Cities region.

Vernon Cemetery itself reflects this long history as the final resting place of many of Sherburne County's pioneers and influential figures. Among those buried here are founding families who established farms and businesses, Civil War veterans who served the nation, and community leaders who helped build the town's institutions, including churches, schools, and local government.

Vernon Cemetery remains one of Sherburne County's most underrated landmarks. Its quiet grounds, shaded by stately oaks, hold generations of stories waiting to be discovered; stories of perseverance, community, and the enduring spirit of Elk River's earliest residents.



W.M. COOMBS

William Coombs was born in Maine, moved to Minnesota in 1854, settled in Elk River and was married there in 1860.

On Dec 30, 1861, he enlisted in Company C of the 1st Minnesota Infantry and served as a Private. On January 1, 1864, William re-enlisted as a Veteran Volunteer. He remained with the First Minnesota and was mustered out on July 14, 1865.

After the war William was a farmer and later a laborer. He and his wife had two children; Susan (1872) and Ernest (1877).

William died at the Soldiers Home in Minneapolis on March 5, 1902 and is buried in Vernon Cemetery in Elk River.

MARY NICKERSON

Mary Ann Barnard Nickerson was born January 8, 1841. She married Henry Otis Nickerson in Anoka, Minnesota on November 22, 1862.

Mary was the mother of five children, Mary Elizabeth, Fred William, Harry Barnard, Alice (Allie), and Ella (Eleanor).

Mary and Henry lived in the home they built on their farm land on the east edge of the village of Elk River. When Henry died, a small home called a bungalow was built for Mary just west of the farmhouse on the now northeast corner of Gates and Third St.

After Mary had a stroke and needed help, her daughter Allie came to live with her until Mary's death.



J.Q.A NICKERSON

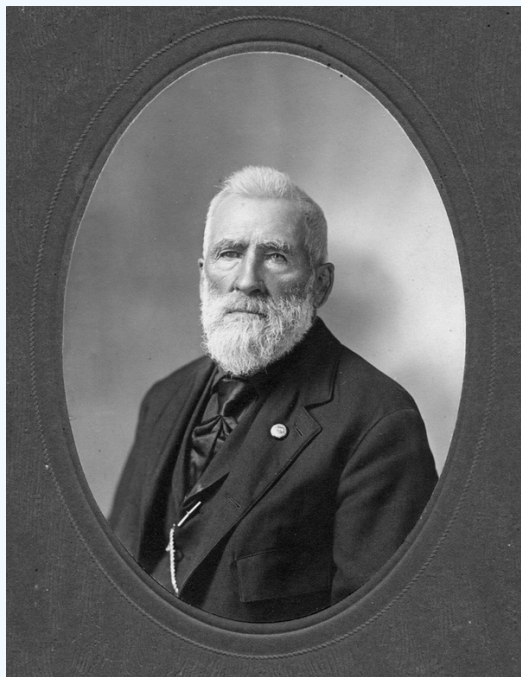
John Quincy Adams Nickerson was born in Maine in 1825. He was named after President John Quincy Adams.

Nickerson moved to Minnesota in 1849 and settled in Elk River in 1853.

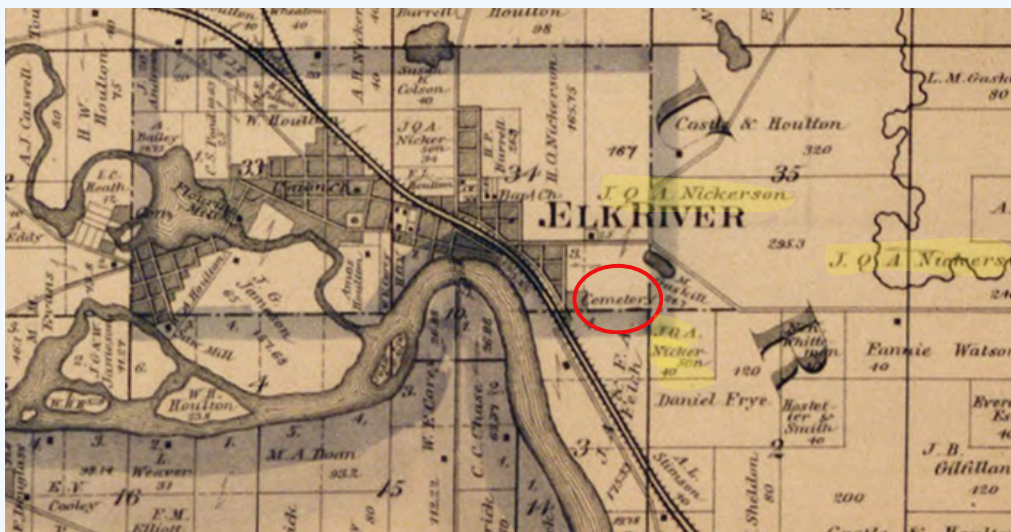
Nickerson owned the first hotel in Elk River, later known as the Riverside, that was located near what is now the Orono Dam. He also owned a mercantile and lumber business.

He was active in politics and served as the first postmaster in Elk River and as the Sherburne County treasurer.

JQA's son Vernon drowned in the Mississippi River at only two years old. The Vernon Cemetery in Elk River is named after him.



1888 Map of Elk River showing JQA Nickerson property and an area marked Cemetery which is now Vernon Cemetery.





CHARLES BABCOCK

Charles Babcock had a huge impact on Sherburne County, on the entire state of Minnesota.

He was born in 1871 in Sherburne County's Orrock Township and later lived in Elk River. As a young man he went to the University of Minnesota, intending to get an engineering degree, but changed his plans because of an economic crash in 1893.

Charles was forced to come back to Elk River to work in the general store owned by his family.

Babcock also became involved in banking and served as president of The Bank of Elk River. The Bank of Elk River was founded in 1885 by W.L. Babcock and other businessmen. Members of the Babcock family have served on the bank's board for almost 150 years. John Babcock is the bank's current chairman, president and CEO.

Additionally, Charles Babcock went on to leave his mark on transportation in Minnesota he recognized the importance of shipping and transportation while working at his family's general store.

In 1917, he was appointed commissioner of highways and had a huge impact on transportation in Minnesota. Babcock proposed the Babcock Plan to amend the Minnesota Constitution. Known as the Babcock Amendment, it levied taxes first on automobile registration and later on gasoline to fund roads.

Today, evidence of Babcock's influence still lingers in Elk River. The Babcock Memorial Park is located along Highway 10 in Elk River, across from Great River Energy. Babcock Memorial Park was constructed in 1938-1939 to commemorate Charles M. Babcock, who served as Minnesota's first commissioner of highways from 1917 to 1933 and who initiated the 'Babcock Plan,' which established the state trunk highway system.



W.H. HOULTON

William H. Houlton was born in 1840 and moved to Minnesota in 1856, following in the footsteps of his brother, Horatio, who had arrived two years earlier.

William moved to Elk River in 1866, after serving in the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 as part of the 8th Minnesota Regiment.

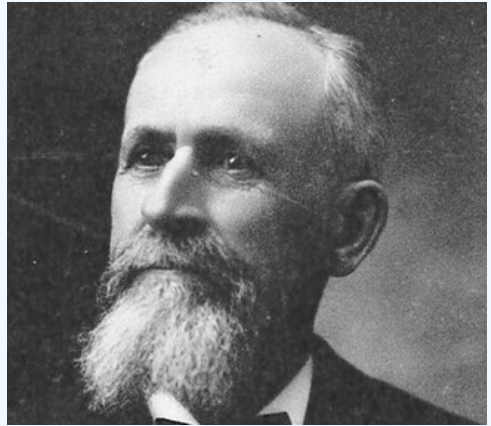
William and Horatio opened Houlton Mercantile and became involved in milling. William also served as Sherburne County treasurer from 1870 to 1874, and in the Minnesota Senate from 1879 to 1886.

Remarkably, W.H. Houlton was also the superintendent of the St. Cloud Reformatory. The state tapped Houlton to manage the prison after some mismanagement there. He held the post from 1886 to 1900.

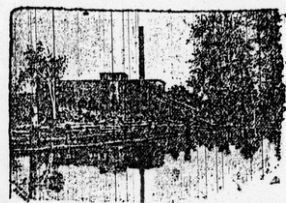
Houlton left his mark in banking as well. He founded what is now First Bank Elk River in 1902, a bank that continues to this day.

William's great-grandson, John Houlton, is the current board chairman of First Bank Elk River and president, board chairman and CEO of the holding company that owns the bank.

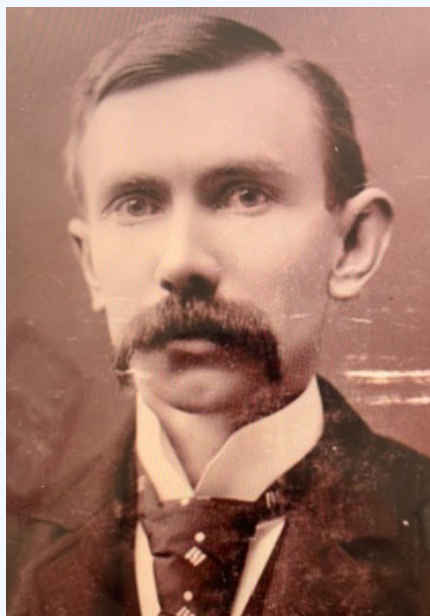
William's legacy also lives on in public land located by the Orono Dam, at 1801 Main St. in Elk River, that bears his name: the 335-acre William H. Houlton Conservation Area. Before becoming a conservation area, the site was home to a farm that had been owned by the Houlton family for more than a century.



WM. H. HOULTON,
REAL ESTATE EXCHANGE
And Proprietor of the
ELK RIVER SAW MILL.



Manufacturer of and Dealer in
PINE LUMBER,
AND OTHER BUILDING MATERIAL,
Elk River, Minnesota.



HENRY CASTLE

Although Henry Castle is not buried in Vernon Cemetery, he was a prominent figure in the Elk River and Sherburne County areas.

Henry was born on May 24, 1858 in Hepworth, Upperthong, Yorkshire, England. His family moved to New York in 1863, New Albany, Indiana in 1870 and after living for a time in New Ulm, MN, the family moved to Clear Lake, MN where, in 1880, Henry farmed with his father who later died after being gored by a bull on their farm.

Henry married Carrie L. Sherfenberg, also from Clear Lake, in 1882 and they had a daughter, Carrie, who died at one-month-old and is buried in Clear Lake, MN.

Henry was at various times, Register of Deeds, Assessor and Clerk of Court for Sherburne County, Treasurer for the Elk River School District and the Village of Elk River. He was also very active in the Republican party at the local and state levels and was a member of the Union Congregational Church.

He also was a partner with W.H. Houlton and W.L. Babcock in the Elk River Milling Company and with Houlton in the Elk River Creamery. Henry was involved in real estate development in Minneapolis where, in 1893, he platted Castle's Addition, a residential development in northeast Minneapolis.

On June 1, 1885, Henry, W.H. Houlton and W.L. Babcock put together \$10,000 in capital and founded The Bank of Elk River as a partnership. Henry ran the bank from 1885 to 1906 when he sold his interest to the Union Investment company and moved to Pasadena, California.

Henry led a quieter life in California where he held jobs in banking and accounting. Henry also started and was president of banks in Lake Fremont (Zimmerman) Minnesota and Havana, North Dakota although the Lake Fremont bank never opened.



CLARENCE “BAKE” ANDERSON

“Bake” Anderson, legally known as Clarence Anchor Anderson, remains a little known and unreferenced businessman and contributor to Elk River history.

Clarence Anderson gained the nickname “Bake” early. He attended the Dunwoody Baker’s School in the 1920s with the goal of owning his own bakery.

Beginning in about 1932, Bake Anderson opened Anderson’s Bakery in downtown Elk River. For 38 years he maintained the bakery business in high tradition.

His love of baseball and work to organize little league teams also set Bake Anderson apart from most of Elk River. In his obituary, memorials remembered his work during World War Two. All the fathers were called into service and the kids were running around town with nothing to do. He organized teams and leagues. Despite gasoline and tire rations, Bake Anderson chauffeured the players to their games using his delivery truck.

After his retirement, he continued to live and support Elk River until his death in 1997. His community support and his work building a thriving business made the Anderson Bakery and Bake Anderson memorable to the history of Elk River.

New Bakery

Now Open

At Home Bake Shop Location

Our bread will be on sale at all grocery stores
in Elk River.

1 ½ lb. loaves	10c
1 lb. loaves	8c

Rolls, 20c and 25c
Baked Fresh Every Day

OUR OPENING SPECIAL
Cookies, any kind, 3 doz. . 25c

Clarence Anderson
ELK RIVER . . . MINNESOTA

CHARLES WHEATON

One of the first attorneys to settle in Sherburne County was Charles S. Wheaton Sr. who came here from Syracuse, N.Y. in 1872.

Charles was born in Orange County, Vermont, in the year 1849. After moving around from Michigan to New York, Wheaton arrived in Minnesota and was admitted to the Bar at St. Paul, in August, 1872.

After moving to Elk River, Charles took on a prominent role in the civic and commercial life in Elk River.

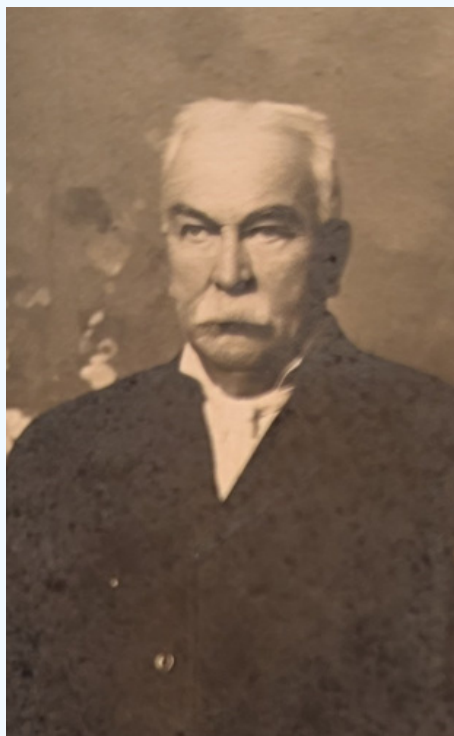
He was appointed counsel for the Great Northern railway shortly after his arrival in Minnesota and held that position until the time of his death in 1925. He also served two terms as probate judge and later served as county attorney.

When the village of Elk River was being incorporated, Mr. Wheaton probably did more than any other man to see that it was accomplished. He made a trip to the state capitol at his own expense in the interests of the village.

He was the first chairman of the village council of Elk River and as a result capably guided the village government through on eof its most critical periods.

Wheaton was also a member of the school board of Elk River for overy thirty years and his administration of the educational affairs of the district did much to bring to Elk River its excellent reputation for good schools.

In his law business Mr. Wheaton won the respect of attorneys and clients and his services were much sought after .He was a director and legal advisor of the First National Bank of Elk River for many years.



PERRY JONES

Perry McDonald Jones, was a popular, black tonsorialist “barber” in Elk River. Born in Chester, Illinois, he followed the Mississippi River northward to finally land in Elk River. Married in 1878 and later divorced, Perry Jones began working as a barber in Elk River since at least 1900.

Perry Jones died in 1945 at age 92, after 61 years of being a barber in Elk River. He had a shop in the old Hotel which burned in 1915 and later relocated inside First National Bank, where he stayed for 40 years.

Perry passed the time between customers watching the Mississippi from his window.



ELOISE OSCARSON

Eloise Agnes Forsyth Oscarson was born in Amarillo, Texas. Her family moved to St. Cloud, MN for a short time before moving to Elk River, MN.

After graduating from Elk River High School, Eloise worked for the Elk River Clinic for 17 years doing office work and assisting Dr. Roehlke.

In 1949 she assisted Dr. Roehlke when a farmer was struck by lightning while planting potatoes.

She left the clinic to marry Perlair Oscarson and raise her two children: Charles and Mary Jane.



CYNTHIA L. SHELDON

Mrs. Cynthia L. Sheldon, one of the first settlers in the Elk River area, died on July 5, 1917, at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Mary Rand, having reached the age of 92 years. Heart trouble was the immediate cause of her death.

Mrs. Sheldon was born March 10, 1825, in Dorsett, Vermont, and there she spent her girlhood and went to school. She was married to H. H. Sheldon in 1853 in Vermont, and they shortly afterwards came west, first to Savannah, Ill., and from there by steamer to St. Anthony.

Coming to Elk River they settled on a farm about two miles east of town, on the main trail between St. Anthony and St. Cloud.



VIRGINIA SINCLAIR ATKINS

Wife of Howard M. Atkins. Daughter of Samuel Sinclair and Euphemia (Cravens) Sinclair. Virginia was probably born in Morgan County, Illinois, where her father was a farmer in 1850.

On the 1895 and 1900 censuses, Virginia Atkins and her children lived in Elk River, Sherburne County, Minnesota. She was a widow by 1895, and her brother, John Sinclair, lived with the family.

The 1900 census says that Virginia Atkins had given birth to 10 children, but only 4 were alive. Those living in 1900 were: Mary Eunice, Ruth Ellen, Blanche and Sinclair E. Atkins. The children who died before 1900 are buried in Vernon Cemetery.



WILLIAM MAC “BUP” HAMLET

Mac was born the son of Lewis Bradley Hamlet and Elizabeth Clarissa Harmon Hamlet. He married Mildred Hulbert on December 20, 1920 in Sherburne Co., MN.

The Hamlet family was heavily involved in the Vernon Cemetery Association board. The Hamlet family owned the Hamlet Monument Company in Anoka and commissioned the current granite Vernon Cemetery sign and made it in memory of William Mac “Bup” Hamlet.



Obituary from the Star Tribune on October 1, 1983.

Hamlet

William M., age 86, of Elk River. Survived by daughter, Mrs. Roland (Shirley Ann) Benson, Elk River; 2 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren. Funeral Monday 1 pm Union Church, Elk River. Visitation Sunday 4-8 pm Dare's Funeral Home, Elk River. Interment Vernon Cemetery. Memorials preferred.



SUPPORT VERNON

**There are many projects needing support at Vernon Cemetery.
PLEASE DONATE!**

www.sherburnehistorycenter.org/supportvernon



Vernon Cemetery VOLUNTEER Association Board

Lynn Caswell - President
John Babcock - Vice President
Jody Birdsall - Treasurer & Co-Secretary
Mary Jane Rohlf - Co-Secretary
Keith Quamman - Board Member