

## Gomsrud Park

Fairmont has many beautiful parks. One of these parks, Gomsrud Park, has recently been the subject of much discussion regarding the channel between Budd Lake and Hall Lake. But how did Gomsrud Park get its name? According to the November 16, 1955, edition of the *Fairmont Daily Sentinel*, as well as other *Sentinel* newspaper articles of that time period, Mrs. Inga Gomsrud stated that the property, now known as Gomsrud Park, was for sale only to the city of Fairmont. This was because her husband, Michael Gomsrud, had always wanted the land to be for the use of the public.

So, just who was Michael Gomsrud? Michael Gomsrud was a Norwegian immigrant whose love for children was well known in this area. Affectionately known as “Mike,” he was born in Norway in 1893 and came to America in 1914. He served with the U. S. Armed Forces in France for thirteen months during World War I. He came to Fairmont in 1920 and worked as a shoemaker for C. E. Braun.

He became very skilled in this seemingly humble profession and his ability attracted customers from a wide geographic area. He considered himself a “shoe rebuilder,” and repaired shoes so that they literally looked like new. He was a very hard worker, and as well as repairing shoes, he also made shoes and boots to order.

In addition to his work, he also had a number of hobbies. Some of these hobbies included making hunting knives, and hunting for pheasants, ducks, deer, and rabbits. He also organized raccoon hunts on a large scale, and his “raccoon feeds” became increasingly popular with the locals over the years.

As a result of his solid work ethic and prudent spending habits, Mr. Gomsrud was able to purchase a home, a farm, and he also erected a business building as well as an apartment. He acquired the property that is now known as Gomsrud Park because he was a true conservationist at heart. His goal was to preserve the area for future generations to enjoy.

Mike Gomsrud was a glowing example of the fact that America is truly a land of opportunity. His accomplishments were realized through hard work and thrifty habits. He demonstrated that success was achievable even though he initially faced a language barrier and had no capital at his disposal. His success could certainly be considered to be a quintessential example of the fulfillment of the American Dream.

Mike Gomsrud passed away in 1945. Although Mrs. Gomsrud had the opportunity to dispose of the property for more money, she held onto it looking forward to the possibility that the city would eventually want it, which would in turn satisfy Mr. Gomsrud’s desire for it to become a park for the public to enjoy for many years into the future. Eventually, this property was purchased by the city of Fairmont from Mrs. Inga Gomsrud in 1955 for \$10,000.00. Naming the park after Mr. Gomsrud was one of the stipulations of the agreement between her and the city in order to pay tribute to Mr. Gomsrud’s memory as well as providing a lasting tribute to the American way of life.

For more information on this topic, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.