

## The Dumpmaster's Report

Abigail B. Calkin

Under our kitchen sink, we have seven labeled buckets: glass, # 1 & #2 plastics, aluminum cans (flattened), compost, tin cans (flattened), compactables, and burnables. The compactables go in the landfill at the dump, and the burnables we burn, usually to light our wood stove. All else we take to the dump for recycling. One winter day when Rob and I went to the dump, I noticed some tables of numbers on the wall in the Dumpmaster's headquarters. Drawn like a bee to honey (or a raven to garbage), I immediately read them. These are buzzing (rrawrrk-ing) to be charted, I thought. I talked to Paul Berry, our dumpmaster, about it, and he grew quite excited at this possibility. I waited for the 1997 numbers, and procrastinated too. Paul called me one day to say he'd received the last of the 1997 figures from Becky.

Now this was good news because I'd already invited Paul and his lovely numbers for dinner the following evening. I went to the Mercantile that morning when Becky was working there. I walked straight to her and said how much I appreciated that she had just sent the final 1997 dump statistics to Paul. He was coming for dinner tomorrow, and we certainly would use them. My excitement must have been more exuberant than I realized, for Becky moved towards me, kindly put her arm across my shoulders, drew me to her, and patted me. "Abigail, I am *so* happy Paul has found someone as excited about the dump numbers as he is!"

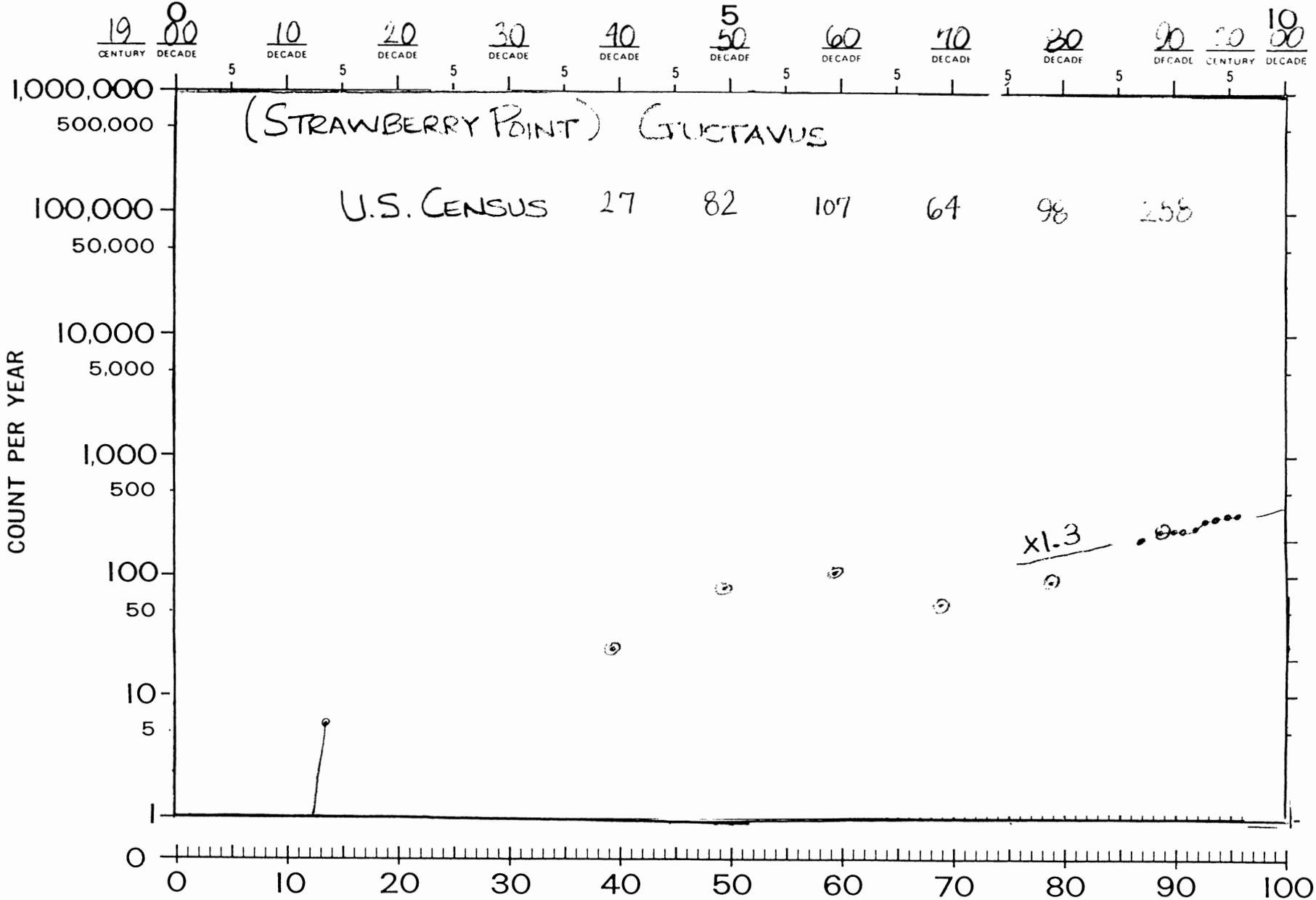
I charted the dump data on the Standard Celeration Yearly Charts. (I have used the Daily Charts for 31 years, and they are just that: Standard Daily Charts on which many of us in education have charted and, therefore, measured change in student learning. We measure in cooking, sports, and medicine; why not measure learning each day? community development

each year?) The advantage of these Charts is that I only need to explain it once, for they are *standard*. The Yearly, Monthly, and Weekly Charts all start with 1 at the bottom and go up to 1,000,000; the years, months, or weeks go across. Thus, the Chart works for measuring world population, Gustavus population, people killed in wars or from AIDS, school district budgets, ecological and economic concerns such as the Gustavus Dump statistics, children learning to read, etc. Each chart is printed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper and any line going from corner to corner, or equivalent slope, doubles every five years on the Yearly Chart (or every week on the Daily Chart when used for student learning).

I realize I'm a newcomer to Gustavus, causing the population to increase. With the concern about people moving in, I had assumed, and feared, the population here was doubling every five years. Using the U.S. Labor Department census figures for 1940 through 1990, the population grows at less than half that, at a 30% increase in the past 10 years. Ever since the Davises, Henrys, and Taggarts--the first three non-Native couples settled here, the population has grown at about x1.3 (Chart 1). The two exceptions are x3, a triple, from 1940 to 1950 and a x2.6 jump from 1980 to 1990. I presume the '40 to '50 increase was because of military or park personnel coming. Someone told me the almost by half decrease from '60 to '70 came because the military personnel left.

Keep in mind the x1.3 population increase, because the Gustavus Dump *grows faster*. This means that we are using the dump more than we used to-- recycling, taking the compactables to the dump rather than burying them on our land. Rita Wilson said when they moved here in 1971, each family had so much land, it didn't matter. Now it matters, though, because near where someone may have put an outhouse or buried a lead battery 30 years ago, someone else may now want to dig a well.

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GUSTAVUS  
 BEHAVIOR \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_  
 ABRIGAIL CALKIN \_\_\_\_\_  
 CHARTER \_\_\_\_\_

PEOPLE  
 LABEL COUNTED  
 ○ OFFICIAL CENSUS  
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Paul and I used four years of dump data, 1994 through 1997. Dump membership (per year, \$30 per household, \$50 per business) has increased by x2.6 ( Chart 2). It grows at more than a double. Probably more new households are joining the dump. Income from Disposal Fees (Chart 2), i.e., all landfill and non-recyclable items, is growing at x4! That means people use the dump rather than burying or burning their non-recyclables, their disposable items. As Paul said, "Sorting and separating recyclables is a habit this town is getting used to. "That's great"

What about the dollars? Chart 2 also shows our good moneymaker is aluminum cans. We also make some money on smelter (catfood cans, pie tins, aluminum foil, old aluminum fry pans), lead, copper and aluminum wire. Our money from all these items sent south is growing at x2.6.

The major source of income continues to be grants. Because the dump requests different amounts of money in any year, varying from about \$2,800 to \$22,000, our overall income (Chart 2) is decreasing by  $\div 1.5$ , or 50% every five years; that's because the amount of grant money, presently a major source of income, has decreased. Our dump statistics, however, help us apply for new money! While the dump expenses vary a little bit each year, they maintain--x1.0 means no growth...no growth up or down--in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 range. Income, even though presently decreasing, is, overall, higher than expenses (Chart 2).

"It used to be all the capital you needed was a match," said Paul Berry. Times a-changin' and the Gustavus Dump is growing in a way that I think could serve as a model for other communities.

A note from Abigail: This article was published in the Gustavus local monthly newspaper, *Icy Passages*, in summer '98 when tourists were visiting...giving PT even broader circulation! Because of space, I reduced the two charts by 66% so they both fit on one page; I sent the original charts also...just in case the editor would print them, which he did.

## References

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