Fertile, Minnesota History

Fertile was platted on May 25, 1887, at 5 p.m. in the office of Andrew Gilken, register of deeds, in Crookston. The original plat included 19 blocks with 239 lots and a public park in the southwestern corner. The D and M Railroad ran through the middle. Washington Avenue bordered the original townsite on the north and Garfield Avenue on the south; Mill Street on the east and a half block west of Third Street. The townsite of Fertile was platted by James B. Holmes and his wife, Caroline F. Holmes, owners and proprietors of the property, of Minneapolis. James M. Payne of Carlton had bought the site from Holmes.

Henry L. Gaylord, lawyer, real estate agent and farmer, who was the third settler in Liberty Township in 1882, “was in charge of the sale of lots when the original townsite was put on the market in 1881.” He sold 50 lots the first week. The advent of the railroad to Fertile in 1886 caused a building boom. Merchants who had been located at the Home Mill site, at Aldal and at Valley moved their stores into Fertile.

The first building in the Village of Fertile was the store of John LaDue, moved once from LaDue Grove to the old Town of Fertile, located one mile south at the Kankel and Sohler Mill. Other old Fertile merchants followed: Fritz Barholz moved his Fertile House Hotel up, (His home is still standing on Mill Street, where the Lloyd Domiers live today.) The law office of H. L. Gaylord was the fourth building to be erected in Fertile. It was located between the Fertile House and the old Village Hall in the area of where Gamble stands today. George Kronschnabel was duly elected president, or the first mayor of Fertile.

Andrew Opheim, general merchandise store owner: Fritz Barholz, owner of the Fertile House; and A. W. Mott, an attorney, were elected councilmen. Norman Hanson, a partner in the Matthews and Co. Bank, was elected recorder. Filling out the village offices and positions in 1888 were: A. Nelson, justice of the peace; Knute Sandvig, treasurer and later marshal; Martin Engelstad, poundmaster; Brown Knutson and C. C. Dillon, constables; C. C. Bartlett, justice of the peace; D. H. Fisk, village attorney; J. H. Pelhaus, fire warden; and the Board of Health; Dr. Arne Nelson, O. O. Kvenvolden, a blacksmith; and J. C. Johnson. The council voted 4-1 to grant licenses to sell intoxicating liquor within said village provided that it could be done legally, and set June 28, 1888 as the date for receiving saloon licenses.

The first bill was paid on July 9, 1888, $30 for incorporation of the village. Other business at the first meeting was to get the books and blanks printed. Dr. Arne Nelson, the first doctor in Gargeld Township, who was a partner from 1882-93 with Andrew Opheim in general merchandise and drug store, moved from Aldal to Fertile in 1887. The building Nelson and Opheim had at Aldal is today’s Fertile Bakery building, one of the oldest buildings in Fertile. The village had a newspaper early in its history. The Fertile journal was founded in 1882 by Fred Pulher, just three years after the first settlers arrived, and six years before the village was incorporated. Pulher also founded the Red Lake Falls Gazette the same year. A Norwegian newspaper was also published in Fertile for less than a year in the 1890’s.

Fertile was incorporated shortly after it was platted and the village government was organized on June 11, 1888. The first meeting of the Village Council of the Village of Fertile was held in the office of D. H. Fisk (an attorney) June 11, 1888, according to the council minute books of that date. The original Public Park Land was vacated in 1902, as it was located in the southwest corner of the original townsite, an area unsuitable for parklands. In 1975 Fertile had 106 blocks of street system, 39 blocks with hard surface and the remaining 67 blocks gravel surfaced. Fifty acres of land in the city are presently dedicated to parks: The Fertile Hillside Park with Fertile spelled out in flowers, which has caused the community to be known as “The Flower City”; J. D. Mason Park with a wading pool, picnic shelter, overnight camping facilities, permanent barbecue grills, sandbox and playground equipment; Top Notch Park, adjacent to Highway 32, a wayside picnic facility.

FERTILE'S HALL OF FAME

JOHN D. MASON Editor local paper.
Melvin Sherva Editor Fertile Journal.
Supt. S. A. Aas Fertile Public School.
Principal S. A. Jordahl Fertile Public School.
Supt. Dayton Lauthen Fertile Public School.
Rev. G. W. Tolo Pastor Concordia Lutheran.
Ted W. Thorsen Band and Choirs.
Helbert S. Dahl Vocal Instructor.
Hjalmar Erickson Mayor Village of Fertile.
Albert O. Gullieckson Mayor Village of Fertile.
Mrs. Helga Lundby Parochial and Sunday Schools.
Mrs. L. Aas Parochial and Sunday Schools.
Mrs. Cyrus Sannes Parochial and Sunday Schools.
Miss Inga Hamre Parochial and Sunday Schools.
Odd Eide Business man.
Nels Vasselien Business man.
Norman Hanson Business man.
Knut Nelson Community doctor.
Wm. Kostick Community doctor.
Dr. Risjord Community doctor.
C. B. Bang Local dentist.
Russell Knutson Nursing Home.
J. B. Austinson Attorney at Law.

Fertile salutes the many outstanding citizens who gave dedicated service to the community during the first half of the century. We build on the foundations they have laid.

ALFRED BERG

There weren’t many ways of making a living in Os, Norway, so many young men took to the sea. Alfred Berg became a sailor and eventually found himself in the Great Lakes and the Duluth seaport. In the meantime, Jorgen Rud as a young man left Nesbyen, Norway, and came to America to homestead southwest of Maple Bay. Mary Kittleson took a homestead next to Jorgen and the two decided to farm together. They were married around 1880. Rev. Megrund officiating. To this union, nine girls were born, one of them being Milla.

Alfred came to Fertile from Duluth, as he had a brother Vincent there. He met and married Milla Rud on January 3, 1920. They were married by Rev. Aakre. They lived in Minneapolis for six years and their two children were born there. They are Dr. Arnold Berg of Thief River Falls, Minnesota,