BYGLAND TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

Byland township can boast of having had four public schools— one of them being one of the first to be organized in Polk County. District #4, later called “Sunny Four”, was organized July 24, 1876. It was at first located in Section 11. Later it was moved to Section 10 directly south of the Byland American Lutheran Church. On July 1, 1959, the school was closed and the district became a part of Independent School District #595, East Grand Forks. The building was sold to the Stanley Cariveau who moved and remodeled it and lived in it a number of years.

District 92, located in Section 27, was organized March 12, 1883. It was closed May 5, 1959. Part of the district became a part of Fisher District #600 and the west part of Highway 220 joined East Grand Forks District #595. This school building was purchased by Ramon Torgerson who remodeled it and made a home.

District 222 — the Triple Two School — was located in Section 12. It was organized in May, 1895. In 1955 the school was closed and the district became a part of Fisher District #600. The building was moved directly north of that location and is being used as a home for migrant laborers.

District 223, the Poplar Grove School, was organized May 8, 1895, located in Section 8. This school was closed July 1, 1959. It was remodeled and the Steve Cariveau family lives there.

In each case auctions were conducted and the property and buildings were sold.

The schools were governed by the county superintendent with the school located at the county seat at Crookston. Each school had a local board composed of chairman, clerk and treasurer.

For a time the seating was composed of benches and tables. Later there were desks with seats that could seat two or three children. Later single seats were brought in and these were often fastened to long boards which kept the seats in a row. Then came the single desk and seat fashioned in one piece. Very often the children had to sit in a seat that was much too large for them which was very tiring.

Some of the first stoves were placed in the center of the room— a freeze or fry type of heating. Later a large iron stove was placed in a corner with a jacket around it where fresh air was brought in by a large pipe. There was a pan for water inside the jacket to add humidity to the room. At first wood was used for fuel, later coal was burned. Then came the oil burners with more comfort.

The schools were often considered the center for entertainment. Programs were given by the pupils, who were often joined by adults of the community, at Christmas time and at the closing of the school term. Lunches or even full meals were often served. Entertainment was singing games, often with Norwegian singing, square dances and other stunts and games. There were also spelling bees or contests.

Play Days got to be very popular. Sometimes many schools would get together at Crookston, and sometimes groups of schools would get together or a school would have its own. Many kinds of races, relays and games were played. Lunch was always served.

Enrollment at the schools was large in the early days. There were more than fifty pupils. Many of these were “big” boys and girls, since the compulsory attendance age was 16 years, and the majority were not able to go beyond the rural school. Often, too, it became necessary to forbid the use of the native language. In one school there were many who spoke Norwegian or French. Many of the children learned the speech of their parents.

One of the favorite sports was skating or skiing in the winter. In two instances, at least, this led to tragedy. While skating home from school on a coulee near District 92, two young sons of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Jenson and two sons of Mr. and Mrs. Gunnuf Johnson went through the ice and were drowned. A few years later, another brother, Kenneth Johnson, also drowned while skating home from school.

The day of the country school is ended, but it will be remembered by many with fond memories.

BYGLAND’S STORES

In 1897 S. K. Flaat opened the Byland Store, selling groceries and general merchandise, and housing the post office. Since Byland was an “inland Town” (not situated on a railroad) the mail was brought over from Fisher. “Credit” business was the customary method of that time so there are good records of prices. Some typical prices were: Shirts 45¢, overalls 75¢, shoes 90¢ and $1.00, braces (suspenders) 35¢, gingham and percale 7¢ a yard and the lowly calico only 4¢ a yard. Some food prices were: butter 13¢ per lb., eggs 8¢ per dozen, bacon 12¢ a lb., beef 6½¢ a lb., and pork 10¢ a lb. Other articles for sale included: lamp chimneys, 10¢, sweat pads (for horses) 40¢ and Kuriko $1.25 for a large bottle. Kuriko was a patent medicine and was widely used — a cure for all ills. “Spearhead” and “Climax” were the most popular brands of Chewing Tobacco.

Loans were necessary to finance business ventures as well as to purchase farms. This was particularly true, because the custom was to charge everything and pay only once a year — after the harvested grain had been sold. Interest rates were high, banks charging 10% and others slightly less. As Alfred Solstad so aptly phrased it in his “History of Bylang Church”, “Money was scarce but its buying power was great.”

Flaat sold this store in the spring of 1903 to T. G. Olson and Sons. With sons, George and Oscar working in the store, they remained in business until 1919, when Flaat repurchased it and it remained in the family until its demise in 1965. While Olsons owned it, a coal stove in the living quarters at the rear caused a fire to start and the building burned. The George Olson family then moved to a farm one mile east of the store. Business was carried on in the warehouse adjacent to the store until the new building was completed. The living quarters in the new store were upstairs and were occupied by Oscar and

S K. Flaat Store and Home, Community Hall on second floor. Osmund Jore Store.