Pine Creek, Iowa where he lived until 1880. Guri Vidden was born in 1860 in Gol, Hallingdal, Norway and came to America in 1879 with her parent, Helge Olson Vidden and Gunhild Loken Vidden, brother Ola and two sisters Gunhild and Oline. In 1881 her sister, Ingrid came; and in 1882 her sisters Anna and Margit came, to America.

On May 5, 1880 Guri and Ole were married in Iowa, and afterwards they left with friends and relatives on their way to the Fertile community. The trip by covered wagon took five weeks. They homesteaded 160 acres in Garfield Township, about five miles northeast of Fertile, where they farmed and raised a family. Their first home was a log house and later a two-story frame house was built. They were charter members of Little Norway Church which was organized July 6, 1880 at Torger Osstaard’s house. The Kastes had eleven children, three of whom died at an early age: Oscar, the oldest, was killed by lightning when he was seventeen years old; Albert died of rheumatic fever when he was sixteen years old, and Nora died at age one. The other children were Mrs. Emil (Clara) Erickson, Mrs. Arne (Tina) Bolstad, Mrs. Nille (Julia) Bolstad, Iver, Gilbert, Otto, Mrs. Albert (Nora) Dahle, and Mrs. Otto (Oline) Nelson. Only the two latter are still living. Guri died in 1924 and Ole in 1928.

**SAMUEL CALVIN LA DUE**

One of Fertile’s early school teachers and postmasters was Samuel Calvin La Due. He was born in a frontier town on the Iowa prairies in 1867 at Plymouth, near Mason City, though his father, Calvin, was then the first minister at Manson, Iowa. When he was twelve years old, he came to Polk County when his parents, Reverend Calvin and Marilda (Sanford) La Due and young children came north to take up claims on the Crookston Prairie in 1879. They came with his uncle John S. La Due and family and also the aging grandparents, the Reverend Samuel Peters La Due and Sarah M. (Wright) La Due, formerly from New York State. They all came north to take government claims and help tame another wilderness.

Uncle John’s cabin was built first in what is now called “La Due Grove” and they all crowded into that one house the first winter. Clearing the land for farming and growing their food for those first years was time consuming and hard work. Before they could get much started the first winter they lived mostly on rabbits they hunted and rutabagas they grew, as Nelson, the youngest son of Calvin, heard the story later!

During these first hard years while Sam’s father, Calvin, farmed and was the first minister at Fertile’s beginnings; three more brothers and sisters were born. Sam had been teaching in one-room country schools, as well as in Fertile, but he then decided to go to the University of Minnesota to become a civil engineer. During his first term, he caught scarlet fever and came home. His father caught it from him and died in 1891. Thereafter, Sam felt it necessary to stay home and help his mother raise the family. They sold the claim, moved into Fertile and built a log house on the south edge of town, on what became Polk Street. He continued to teach and eventually built a two-story house across the street from the early log house, now 109 Polk Street. Samuel became postmaster in 1906, having helped his two brothers, Thomas and Nelson, to become dentists and his sisters through high school to become self-supporting teachers; he married at the age of forty to start his own family.

Samuel married Gertrude May Black in 1907. She had come to Fertile in her work as organizer for her Free Methodist Church in northern Minnesota. Mildred was born in 1909 and when Samuel lost his job as postmaster in 1912 due to a change in political parties, he bought back father’s claim west of Fertile and returned to farming. A second child, Ethel, was born in 1913 in the small house Sam built almost on the original site of his father’s first log cabin. Later he acquired a house nearer the road. This was a return to almost pioneer living conditions and more work and worry that kept a strain on the family.

Mildred and Ethel had a two and one-half mile walk through woods and fields to Lone Oak School, a one-room grade school north of Fertile. This was too much for small children in bad weather and although parents took turns driving and taking them, they missed many days of school in the winter.

During World War I both Sam and Gertrude returned to teaching in country schools, the girls going to school with their mother out on the Beltrami prairie. Then son Milton was born in 1921; and soon after, Sam decided to go to truck-farming in a time of prosperity. He moved to Park Rapids onto seven acres where he raised strawberries and kept bees the rest of his life.

Samuel C. La Due was a quiet, intellectual type of man. He read a lot on science and once invented a special kind of ruler. He was a good father who tried to do the best he could for his family and realized few of his own personal ambitions. He died in 1942, while Gertrude survived him for nearly twenty-five years. Gertrude once wrote a sketch of her life she called, “From Ox-Cart to Jet” and this well described the span of their lives.

Mildred and Ethel married brothers, Sidney E. and Lee O. Mead: Milton married Anna Nell Reynolds and had six children: Russel, Terry, Geoffry, Kieth, Celia and Samuel, and one grandchild, son Kieth’s son Daniel. All of these descendants of Samuel and Gertrude La Due are living in 1975.

**HANS H. LARSON**

Mr. and Mrs. Hans H. Larson, a sailor, immigrated to America from Norway. They settled in Racine, Wisconsin. Later they moved to Fillmore County, Minnesota. In the late 1870’s, they moved to Fertile, Minnesota to a farm in Garfield Township. They had three sons, Oscar, Herbert and Edwin and four daughters. Edwin died in 1905 at the early age of 20 years. After the death of Hans, Oscar and Herbert bought the farm. Mrs. Johanna Larson lived part time with her sons and also in a small house nearby. They were members of the Little Norway Lutheran Church. She died in 1918.

Oscar was born in Racine, Wisconsin. He moved with his parents to Minnesota in the late 1870’s. He married Margit Sonstol in 1907. Margit came to America from Norway with her sister, Thea, and brother, Halvor. Oscar and Margit had six sons: Walter, John, George, Henry, Morris and Orvin. They were members of the Little Norway Lutheran Church, Fertile, Minnesota.

Oscar and Margit moved to Bear River, St. Louis County in 1909 and there they homesteaded and built a one-room log house with dirt floor. Oscar cut and carried logs to where the house was built. They lived there four years and then they moved back to Fertile, Minnesota, where he farmed fifty-three acres which he bought from his parents’ homestead. He farmed with a team of horses and a walking plow. Herbert bought the remainder of the land. Oscar lived there until his death in June, 1917. Their son, Walter, died in September, 1918 at the age of eleven. Margit, alone and without any transportation, raised her family. Orvin, the youngest, was born four months after she lost her husband. She counted on her neighbors for rides to town to buy groceries and deliver the cream. She had a school house moved to the farm and remodeled into a house. She died in March, 1927. The oldest boys went out to work and the youngest stayed with relatives. The farm was rented out for a number of years. In 1932, John farmed it until 1938, when it was sold to Oscar’s brother, Herbert. John Larson bought a 280-acre farm in Garden Township in 1938. He sold it in 1968 and moved to Fertile, Minnesota. He married Clarinda Lewis in 1935. They have two daughters and two sons.

**HELMER J. LARSON**

Halmer J. Larson was born September 11, 1890, the son of Jacob and Elsie Larson in Twin Valley, Minnesota. He spent his youth working on farms in the area, learning automobile mechanics through an apprenticeship in Western North Dakota, and eventually passing the test and obtaining a license to operate a steam engine. He operated a “threshing rig” up and down the valley during the harvest season.

On November 18, 1915 he married Emily P. LaFlash, daughter of George LaFlash and Clara Kingslien LaFlash