Helgeland Township History

A man by the name of P. M. Peterson was the first man to come to the Helgeland area. He returned to Norway with favorable reports of the area and as a result more people came to this area. John Tatro came down from Canada and homesteaded the Southeast quarter of Section 10 in 1891. His brother, Frank, claimed the Northwest Quarter Section 22.

A man by the name of Ben Sandstrud built the first two schools in the area. Maude Fisk and Mabel Roan were the first teachers in these schools. This was in 1909. Lars Hoff also taught early terms. The first meeting of the township was held at a special meeting at the Sandstrud school house on January 29, 1901. The meeting was called to order by Ben Sandstrud. B. J. Williams was chosen to preside as moderator and stated that the order of business at this meeting was to elect town officers. No by-laws were approved at this meeting. The following officers were elected on the first town board of Helgeland Township: Christian Andreasen, chairman; Ben Sandstrud, clerk; Elling Olson, treasurer; Martin Carlson, assessor; Lars Hoff, and Peter Holden, Justices of the Peace; Frank Tatro, and Alfred Abelson, constables.

On October 16 at a special meeting the first official act of the town occurred when they decided to buy a road grader. It was decided to loan the grader to taxpayers at a rate of 50¢ per day. Each user to be assessed a one dollar fine if they did not grease the moldboard after they were finished using the grader.

In order to draw a comparison with those days and the present, I shall relate a case in the township on April 19, 1905. The full board met to consider the request for aid by a town resident. The town officers checked the legality of his claim. After due deliberation that according to law he should be given ten days to depart to Wadena County from whence he had come. In October of that year he was returned with his family to Wadena County.

The soil in Helgeland is of sandy loam nature and over the years the nature of farming has been diversified. The main change has been the use of more of the land for grain farming. The dairy herds are very few in number but much larger sized herds.

Helgeland is one of the few townships that has a large share of young farmers. This should be good for the future of the township.

RECOLLECTIONS OF HOME IN HELGELAND TOWNSHIP

I remember Dad taking us to school in the winter time on a manure sled, pulled by two horses, Tom and Jerry, wrapped in a cocoon of several quilts, so cuddly and warm, and Dad in his sheepskin coat. I remember the whole family around a round oak table with a kerosene lamp in the center. Mom was so afraid of lamps. She used only one lamp at a time and it was always in her possession. I remember how scary detective shows sounded on the radio. We would rush home from school in time to hear "The Lone Ranger", and the whole family gathered around listening to Fibber McGee and Molly, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Art Linkletter and others. I remember learning to dance in the kitchen to a live band in the living room; my Dad and the Sanders brothers, Albert, Ted and Knute. They had a violin, piano, mandolin and guitar. My Dad could play almost any instrument and he never had a music lesson. Often after supper, Dad would spend an hour or so singing and playing his mandolin. He liked to harmonize with me at the piano. He was a little proud of his bass voice. I loved to be with Dad as he was always singing or whistling as he worked.

On wash day we also washed and washed the out-house, and then rinsed it with lye so water. I remember walks to the outhouse in the dark; though I knew there were no wolves and bears in the grove, panic would overcome me half-way back and I would make a mad dash for the house!

I remember a shiny potbelly stove with isinglass windows and the drying mittens and frozen clothes on it. On wash day we hauled pails of water from the well, starting early in the morning. I remember the gas machine that went "put put" and the pump that went from the mouth to the sump. Then there were Ladies Aid meetings where I put clothes on the line most of the day, putting some clothes in a starch solution, drying and then sprinkling with water and wrapping them for ironing the next day. I remember heating flat-irons on the big kitchen range, alternating a cooled one with a hot. On these we had to keep the pressure pumped up on. We also had one of those big black reservoir ranges.

I can still see the dozens of loaves of bread Mom baked every week. On baking day she would make scones which would be flattened on the table into a piece of bread dough fried on a grill. They were best to eat warm with butter and sugar. Another treat was a slice of day old home-made bread with cream and sugar. I remember the hundreds of jars of canned Mom did which were stored on shelves in the cellar. How hard she worked on those hot days! She also canned chickens and beef and pork. We had an icebox but it was tiny and nothing could be frozen. The well was better to keep food cool, and the good water that came from the pump, never tasted as good when it was piped into our home.

Fall was a time to cut wood for the winter. There were woods to the north of our farm. Fall was also time to put tarpaper around the house foundation and pile fresh cow manure about two feet high. I don't remember this stinking. I remember how much warmer the house felt! In the spring this manure was taken and spread on the fields.

Our toys were made out of boxes and orange crates, leaves from trees were our money; wheels and tires were pushed around pretending them to be cars, we climbed trees or just daydreamed out behind the grove. For a while we were involved with attempting to fly, using a flour sack tied to feet and hands as we attempted higher jumps from the sheep shed to the windmill. I never was able to fly!

We seldom went any place except to a close neighbor to visit on a Sunday afternoon. We never had a babysitter. Neighbors would visit and it was always the whole family. I don't remember having to have an invitation to visit. We always had to be home in the morning and evening at a certain time to milk cows. About once a year we would visit an aunt and uncle in Crookston or Grand Forks.

In Mom and Dad's whole married life, I don't think they were ever more than thirty miles from home. They never had a vacation. I remember many gatherings at Grandma's. The highlights of the year were the Farmer's Club picnic, end of the school picnic, the Christmas programs at church and school, and the Marshall County Fair. Then there were Ladies Aid dinners at the church and monthly Farmer's Club meetings where often we got our first experience at performing before a group.

Usually in the fall of the year a big order would come from Sears-Roebuck or Wards. In it would be warm clothes for win-