Liberty Township History

Liberty Township reveals the attitude of the pioneers who named it. The name remains as a reminder of this feeling of gratitude and faith in the new country exhibited strikingly in this way by the township organizers. In 1878 there were only six settlers in the town of Liberty. They were Patrick Connery and sons, Tim and John, P. H. Connery, Mike Connelly and John Scott. In 1879, the Hayer Brothers, Rufus Mayo, Albert Boddy, Albert Middleton, Tom Dinsmore, Miles and William Henry Standish, K. S. Green and Even Eneberg settled in Liberty. The Hayer Brothers came from Pennsylvania, the Standish brothers from New York state, Green and Eneberg from Rice County, Minnesota.

In the early days of the century Liberty Township had four school districts: No. 66 Golden Beam; No. 91 Golden Star; No. 109 Sunnybrook, and No. 67 Sunny Brook. Today the Sand Hill River wanders through Liberty Township. The land is mostly in large farms. Records at the Polk County Courthouse in Crookston show Liberty Township was organized September 13, 1880. The first meeting was held at the home of Jacob Stambaugh, Miles Standish and Samuel Hayes. Clerks for the election were Patrick H. Connery and Isa Johnson. There is no record of the officers elected at that meeting.

The first birth on record was of a boy, Edan, born March 11, 1900, to Peder H. and Mary A. Tallerud. Eight births were listed that year.

Present township officials are: Carl Todahl, Robert Berhow and Norman Nolte, Supervisors; Roland Gullekson, clerk; Marvin Scott, treasurer.

NELS CLEMENTSON

The late Nels Clementson, a farmer in Liberty township, was a pioneer of Polk county, having become a resident about 1887. He was born in Goodhue County, Minnesota, June 30, 1859. His farm is located in section 15, Liberty township, five and a half miles northeast of the village of Fertile. His first purchase consisted of 160 acres, which cost him $3.00 an acre. More land joining this 160 acres was purchased later. His land then consisted of 580 acres.

Mr. Clementson’s first dwelling on his farm was a one-room shack fourteen feet by sixteen feet. He owned four horses, a wagon, a plow and some other farm implements. Mr. Clementson was married in 1896 to Miss Joran Landsverk, a native of Norway. To this union seven children were born.

In 1903 Nels built a fine modern house. In 1908, he built a large T-shaped barn, stabling all his livestock. Mr. Clementson had the satisfaction of knowing that all he had, he had acquired by his own persistent hard work, his careful thrift and his good judgment in the management of his affairs.

His interest was not only his farm. He was a stock holder in the Co-operative Creamery of Fertile, and helped organize the Farmers Elevator Company in 1894, which served as presi
dent for eight years.

When he saw that the hour was ripe for this enterprise, Nels helped to organize the Farmers State Bank of Fertile and of this he became president and held that position until his death in 1928. The farm of the Clementsons, which consists of 500 acres, belongs to the heirs. The children of Mr. and Mrs. Nels Clementson are as follows: Norman Clementson, deceased; Josie Clementson, deceased; Mrs. Stanley Simpson (Millie), teacher, retired, Seattle, Washington; Mrs. Clarence Olson (Mable), teacher, retired, Enderton, North Dakota; Nellie Clementson, teacher, retired, Fertile, Minnesota; Willie Clementson, farmer, retired, Fertile, Minnesota. Nellie and Willie are still living on the farm. The fields are rented out to Clayton Engelstad. The Clementson family belong to the Lutheran church.

CHRISTOPHER AND CAROLINE ENGELSTAD

Christopher and Caroline Engelstad immigrated to America from Norway in 1870. With them were their sons Christ and Martin and a daughter Mary, who became Mrs. Olavus Ring.

Those were the days of the sailing vessels, so they spent six long weeks crossing the Atlantic. Besides the usual huge emigrant chest for clothing and perishable food was another trunk which is still in the family. It shows the painstaking effort of the workmen of that day. It is all hand crafted with a rounded cover, reinforced with heavy iron straps and iron handles on each end of the trunk. The lock is hand made with a very large key. The year is printed on it together with the initials of the builder. It is as sturdy as the day it was built, almost 200 years ago, by some distant ancestor.

The family came to the Fertile area and settled in Woodside township on the farm now owned by Ingram Severson near Rodnes church.

The following children were born there: Hilda (Mrs. Bernt Johnson), Dora (Mrs. Martin Walters), Emma (Mrs. Charles Patterson), Oscar, Hannah (Mrs. Lewis Hanson), Charlotte, Alfred, Millie, Alma (Mrs. Lewis Gardner) now of Chicago. She is the only living member of that generation of Engelstads at this time (1975).

Martin and Dora (Mrs. Martin Walters) were the only two who remained in Polk County until their deaths and many of their descendants still make their homes in Polk County. Christopher and Caroline Engelstad are buried in Maple Lake cemetery east of Fertile.

Martin Engelstad immigrated to America with his parents, Christopher and Caroline Engelstad, when he was four years old. He grew up in Woodside township and married Marie Nesseth, formerly of Ellsworth, Wisconsin. They lived in the village of Fertile for a while, where Martin and his brother Christ owned a small hotel and livery stable. This hotel building was later moved east of the village and used for a "pest house", which was a place to isolate people who had contagious diseases, such as smallpox, diphtheria, etc., which were common before immunization was known or practiced.

Later Martin farmed in Russia township near Beltrami for several years. Their family consisted of: three children who died in infancy; Mabel (Mrs. Herman Holen), Clarence, Hazel, who died at the age of 16 during the influenza epidemic of 1918; Ella (Mrs. Page Blum), Eldon, who became an arthritic and died at the age of 47, and Geneva (Mrs. Kenneth Olson).

During the years they lived in Russia township, the times were hard and the money was scarce, so butter and meat were taken to Crookston and "peddled" around to the saw mill workers living in Carmen Addition. Surprisingly, Crookston then had a saw mill, sawing the logs that were floated down the Red Lake River from the woods to the east.

After a few years of farming, Swamp fever killed many