Onstad Township

Ole P. Onstad, an immigrant from Norway, was honored in the naming of Onstad Township, of which he was a pioneer, some time prior to its organization in 1882.

Earliest records of Onstad Township are not available. The first records on file are from 1884, two years after the town was organized. The first birth recorded in Onstad was that of Carol Alberth Bergh, June 11, 1883. There were four babies born in that township that year. The first death in the township was July 25, 1883, the death of the infant son of the Lars P. Olatads. There were four school districts in Onstad Township in the early part of the century.

Melvin, Minnesota at one time was a little community and trading center, grown up around the railroad tracks. The old Melvin store building still stands, having been moved across highway 32 on its present site, empty. The Spring Gravel Company, located in Onstad township is still in full operation, and supplies gravel and sand over a wide area. During the summer months many railroad cars bring the gravel to various points.

Current Onstad township board includes Marvin Halstad, chairman; Steve Urems, Lawrence Ricard, supervisors; Daniel Wilken, clerk; Vernon Floen, treasurer.

HAFTER B. HAFTERSON

Hafters B. Hafterson was born in Norway, March 24, 1860, to Anna and Bersvend Hafterson. They came to the United States in 1865. Hafters little baby brother died on board ship, about a day's journey from New York. The baby was not tossed overboard but was kept wrapped in blankets. After their mother landed in New York, they found a little cemetery in which they buried the baby.

The family then went on by train to Waukon, Iowa, where they lived for some time. In 1883 Hafters married Sarah Olson and they settled down in Onstad Township in Polk County. Five children were born to them: Bennie, Alton, Carola, Hannah, and a still-born baby boy. Sarah passed away a few days after the baby was born.

In 1894 Hafters married Belle Olson, a sister of Sarah. He had married the oldest and the youngest daughters in the Olson family. Eight children were born to Belle and Hafters: Harry, Melvin, Willie, Inga, Oluf, Ruth, and Irene.

From these two marriages there are five children still living: Mrs. Hannah Monson, Sioux City, Iowa; Willie Hafterson, Westwood, California; Oluf Hafterson, Fargo, North Dakota; Mrs. Ruth Kensing, Crookston, Minnesota; and Mrs. Walter W. (Irene) Hanson, Crookston, Minnesota.

Hafters first home was a sod house, and then a one-room frame house. Some time later he built a large frame house and other farm buildings on their tree-claim farm. This farm was sold in the late forties. All the buildings are still there and kept in very good condition.

During the early years the family endured many hardships. Hauling wood for fuel on a sleigh in winter from Maple Bay, a thirty-mile round trip, was often a difficult task. Besides the sub-zero temperature, the day often ended in a high blizzard on their return trip. The horses became so frosty they could scarcely see. Often Hafters got out of the sleigh to pick out the ice and snow from their eyes and nostrils. He had to rely on the horses‘ judgment to find the way home in the snowstorm.

Two tragic events saddened their lives when death took two at a time within a week. In the spring of 1900 Bennie and Alton died of diphtheria, and in the winter of 1903 Inga and Annie died of scarlet fever.

Family worship and prayer were very important in their home and a source of strength during these hardships. Their home became their house of worship and Sunday School too, as the nearest church was three miles away. They sent for Sunday School pamphlets and Bible-Story books to read.

One of the many high-lights for the whole family was attending the annual camp meeting in June of the First Church of God at Grand Forks, North Dakota.

VASEK

Anna Jermasek and John Vasek were born in Hlinisko, Czechoslovakia. John was in the Army 17 years before coming to the U.S.A. They came here in 1890 and settled in the village of Tabor, Minnesota. They later moved to Farley Township and then to Northland Township in 1908.

Anna was a midwife and delivered over 1,000 babies both in Hlinisko and here in the Tabor area. John was a veterinarian and helped many farmers with cattle. John and Anna had six children: three girls born in Hlinisko and three born in the United States.

The children of John and Anna (Jermasek) Vasek are: Mary married Joseph Kovar in 1902; Nettie, single; Frances married Albert Kovar in 1902 (no children); Joseph married Mary Pri- bula in 1918; Frank married Bertha Gust in 1922 and Ann Palya in 1951; and John married Albina Zherea in 1929.

The children of Mary and Joseph Kovar are: Henry married Adline Falk; William married Beatrice Berg; Anna married John Wavra; George married Cecelia Vanyo; Joseph married Anna Arnold; Albert married Dorothy Vanyo; Emily married Anton Arnold; Mary married Harold Horken and Ervin Lange; Frank married Mabel Piker; and Christine remained single.

Joseph and Mary Vasek's children are: Martha married Leon Halloran; Millie married Ots Arnold; Else married Kenneth Neal; Margaret married Robert Zeljklk; William married Lucille McGrath; Frances married Arnold Braaten; Adeline married Donald Rapacz and Mel Klitzke; Lorraine married Stanley Smeldsru; Raymond is deceased; Ralph married Veronica McIntyre.

Frank and Bertha Vasek's family consists of: Anna who married Robert Piler and Edwin Novak; Helen married Edwin Honek; Henry married Doris Dubuque; Frank married Leona Grysiekiewicz; Henrietta married Daniel Myszkowski; and Baby Vasek died at birth.

John and Almina Vasek's family consists of: Emily, who married Francis Rapacz; Albert married Janet Dargen; George married Marion Hettwelt; and Mary married Leroy Barness.

this skill in the area. He built his own combined house-barn dwelling and hauled the gravel for it in wagons from the pits located east of Highway 75, a distance of thirty miles. He used a yoke of oxen to break up the prairie sod for tillable ground and raised the usual crops of oats, flax, barley, and feed.

One incident depicting the hardships during the earlier winters in this area was retold often. While traveling home from town one day, the Thureens found themselves in a blinding blizzard. So protecting themselves with the sheepskin robes, they let the oxen find the way home. And they did, right to the barn door!

In 1908, John used $500 to pay the year's taxes and had enough money left over to build a new house for his family. In 1925 he built a new barn. He purchased his first tractor in 1915. It was a C.O.D. from Crookston and cost him $800. A three-bottom plow was an additional $300.

The children of John and Anna in Northland Township are: Rose; Oscar, Lily, Carl, Arthur, Edith, Anna, Theodore and Henry. Hildur and Lily died at infancy. Oscar married Clara Flatten and farmed at the location of what is now the Orville Thureen farm. They had four children: Orville, Allen, Gordon and Clai. Clarence. Carl married Marie Stordahl and spent most of his life working for the Minnesota Light and Power Company at Duluth, Minnesota. They had two sons, Carroll and Ronald. Arthur married Tina Olson and lived in East Grand Forks. He operated an automotive repair shop. They had two daughters, Margaret and LeVonne, Edith married Andrew Anderson and also lived in East Grand Forks. They had no children. Anna married Dale Parker and settled in Tocoma, Washington. They had three children, Ronald, Marion, and Georgia. Theodore married Sophia Anderson and farmed the home farm. They had four children, Elaine, Barbara, Curtis, and Dennis. Henry married Jean Geddis and farmed in Northland Township until his retirement, when they moved to McIntosh, Minnesota. They had one daughter, Jeanette.