in this new area so interested other relatives and friends that many of them made the decision to follow the Sullivans, so besides Sullivans, there came the Driscolls, Enrights, Murphys, etc., so many relatives came into the section from Canada that there were at one time eight first cousins whose names were Jim Sullivan, and who, for the sake of identity, came to be known as “Timber Jim”, “Prairie Jim”, “Inkster Jim”, “Marvel Jim”, etc.

The Andrew Sullivans had made the first move, however, and in 1876 began the trip to their new home, having chosen the route through Fisher, Minnesota. They arrived in the early summer of ’76, following which they constructed a log house and a barn before winter set in. James Sullivan and his sister Mary were both eligible to file land claims under the Homestead Act. Jim did not, however, choose to leave his farm, which he had by this time built on, to stake another claim. Thus his sister proved out the claim by living on the land alone for the required fourteen months period, and in turn sold the property to her brother. It was about that time that Mr. Sullivan was able to make the purchase of three additional quarter sections of land, which had been put up for sale by the Northern Pacific Railway.

On February 22, 1881, James Sullivan was married to Bridget Hogan, the daughter of Patrick and Mary Ann Hogan, who had moved to the Grand Forks locality from the Clayton, Ontario, area. The courtship appears to have revolved around family gatherings and square dances at neighboring homes and farms, and for which Jim Sullivan often entertained the groups with his violin. The wedding took place in Grand Forks, and the couple set up housekeeping in Sullivan’s log cabin.

The Sullivans were still living in the log cabin when their first son Leslie was born, December 2, 1882. However, a new house built of local brick and lumber was ready when daughter Josephine was born in 1884. This son and daughter were followed in turn by daughters Clara (Mrs. A. G. Schultz), Laura (Mrs. James E. O’Leary), and Mary, followed by sons Emmett and John.

Besides operating and improving his farm, Mr. Sullivan played an active role in the local community, having served as alderman and city council president. He is said to have introduced horse racing into the area, where in the winters harness races were held on the river near his farm home. At other times the races were on a graded quarter-mile track which he and his sons had prepared just north of East Grand Forks, in the proximity of the present senior high school. Mr. Sullivan died in 1909.

The above draft is as factual as can now be described. It transcends a period during which this section of Polk County developed from a fur trading outpost, experienced an element of the lumbering industry, developed into an outstanding agricultural and dairying area, and then more recently has seen commercial and manufacturing operations develop. It is intended to show briefly how an area was brought to its potential by a people whose potentials were boundless — settlers who came to stay, and who contributed immeasurably to the many facets of the good life which the area and its people have come to know.

JOHN SWENSON


He worked in mines at Irontown, Michigan and laid streetcar tracks and dug trenches for sewers in St. Paul, Minnesota. He also worked at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago on the construction assembly of the gigantic Ferris Wheel, which was described as the most spectacular engineering attraction on the Fair Midway.

Hearing about free railway transportation to obtain homestead claims, he set out to acquire a farm — his own. That had been his dream when he left Sweden. As the train came into the Red River Valley and he saw the black soil — blacker than any he had ever seen, he decided to go no farther than East Grand Forks, Minnesota. “This land was surely richer than any homestead land he could get free in North Dakota.”

He met a nursery man, Oscar Wick, for whom he worked, planting trees at the University of North Dakota when Merri-field Hall was the only building on the Campus. The large elm tree at South Fifth Street and Minnesota Avenue, which was featured in the Grand Forks Herald a few years ago, was one tree he was proud to have planted in a local school.

He and a friend, Ludvig Olson, bought four acres in Rhein-hart Township on Rhinehart Road next to the Wick Nursery and became "gardener's," providing vegetables to grocery stores, restaurants and to railroad dining cars.

In 1895, he sold his half-interest in the small acreage to Mr. Olson and returned to Sweden for a visit. He came back to the United States in 1896, bought seven acres near his friend Olson and again started gardening. He raised asparagus, celery, head lettuce and all the other vegetables which would grow. Tomatoes and cabbage and cauliflower were seeded in "hot bed" flats constructed with storm windows, which were put on and removed according to outside temperature. The plants were thinned and transplanted to another "frame" bed and later set out in the field by hand. A one-horse plow and cultivator was used to till the soil and the ground smoothed by going over it with a roller, which was a heavy cylinder about five feet wide and pushed by hand. Vegetables such as onions, were weeded by hand and hoed, and cultivation between the rows was by a hand cultivator. Apple, plum and cherry trees were for beauty as well as providing fruit for home use.

John received his citizenship papers in 1897, and that same year he with 35 other persons designated their intent to support the organization of a Lutheran church and he became a charter member of the Gustavus Adolphus Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, now Augustana, of Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Emma Swenson arrived in the United States from Smoland, Sweden in 1898, with her sister Augusta. They lived with their sister and brother-in-law, Martina and Swan Johnson, in Northland Township for a while, helping the neighbor farmers in the Scandinavian community. Emma wished to learn the English language, so she secured employment as a maid with non-Swedish people and also worked in the woolen mill, which was located on North 3rd Street, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

She met John Swenson at Church meetings and they were married at John’s home in an outdoor flower garden setting which he had prepared, June 22, 1901.

Together they worked and made a beauty spot of their seven acres, with spacious lawn, shade trees, lilac hedges and a formal flower garden of peonies, iris and sweet peas. Mrs. Swen-