homesteaded in Sandsville township there are only four home-
steads occupied by members of the homestead family. They
are those of Gotfield and Robert Hendrickson, Walter Nelson,
Chester Engen, and Benneth Mathsen.

WILLIAM E. OLSON

William and I came to live in Sandsville township in 1944.
We have lived and farmed the Wilson farm since that time. We
are members of the Lutheran Church in Alvarado. Over the
years William has served on the church board, the Alvarado
school board and at the present time is on the Sandsville town
board.

We are the parents of five children: Margaret, who is mar-
rried to Richard A. Nelson of Oslo. They have a daughter,
Karen. They live in rural East Grand Forks where they farm.
She is a graduate of the University of North Dakota and is an
elk herd teacher, Virgil is at home and farms with his father.
He attended the Area Vocational School at Thief River Falls.
Carol is married to Daniel Baarstad of Nome, North Dakota.
They have a son, Michael, and live in the Grafton area where
he works for Production Credit Association. Both are gradu-
ates of North Dakota State University with degrees in home
economics and mathematics and Vocational agriculture. Bar-
bara is married to Bruce Wold of Thief River Falls. They have
a daughter, Erin. At the present time they live in Bemidji,
where he works as assistant manager in a grocery store and she
works at the Gilfillen Center. She attended Thief River Falls
Junior College. Robert works as an auto mechanic in Grand
Forks. He attended Moorhead Vocational School. He is mar-
rried to the former Maria Trichler of Moorhead and they have
two daughters, Patience and Naomi.

William’s father, Oscar L. Olson, was born in 1894 and
raised in the Alvarado area. Before he began farming he was in
the drapery business with his brother, Albert. From that time
on he was engaged in farming until the time of his death. Wil-
liam’s mother, Hildeborg, came to the United States as a
young girl in 1910 from Sweden. Her father was a concrete
man from the old country, so he built and operated a hotel in
Alvarado, which now houses a grocery store. Five children
were born in this family: Dale of Alvarado, Delores (Mrs. Hel-
mer Pearson), Alvarado, Mrs. Arla Thrall, Grand Forks,
North Dakota, Ivadelle (Mrs. Mel Malmoe) of Spokane,
Washington.

My parents were Martha and Nels E. Nelson of Alvarado.
Martha was born in Sweden in 1881 and came to the country
along with her family in 1884. Nels was also born in Sweden in
1879. He came to the United States by way of Canada, where
he worked for awhile in 1904. After their marriage they lived in
Baudette where they were at the time of the big forest fire.
They came to Alvarado area where they homesteaded and
raised five children: Hjalmer of Alvarado, Andrew of Grand
Forks, North Dakota, Alma, Mrs. Ernest Berg of Middle
River, Inez, Mrs. Klemens Furst, Maple Plain, Minnesota and
myself. My parents were among the pioneers in the sugar
beet industry when the East Grand Forks plant was first
built and operated.

JOHN ORMISTON

It was about 1838 that my ancestors on my father’s side first
came to the United States from Scotland. They bought land at
Dover, Wisconsin, in what is still known as “The Scotch Settle-
ment”. This land was purchased from the government for
$1.25 per acre. It was here that my great-grandparents lived
and are buried in the Scotch Presbyterian cemetery.

During the time the railroad was being built west into North
Dakota, my grandfather, Samuel Ormiston, who was educated
to be a teacher, left Wisconsin when he was twenty years old
and went West to help build the railroad to the coast. He
worked at making the ties with a broad ax. While doing this,
he cut his instep and that left him lame so they made him a
camp “cookie” and he learned to be a very good cook.

There was a camp every ten miles apart and in charge was
an old Indian fighter. Around each camp they built a log
breastwork about five feet high for protection. Samuel had to
get up about 4 a.m. to get breakfast for the men. One morning,
he heard some noise and found Indians circling the camp. He
woke the rest of the men and when the fight was over they
found six dead Indians. The dead Indians each had a tongue
tied around his neck. The camp crew went to the next camp
and found it had been wiped out. The heads of the settlers had
been put up on top of the stakes and their intestines strung out
on the bushes. When Samuel and his men arrived, the camp
had been burned and was still smoking.

After my grandfather was married, he purchased a farm
northeast of East Grand Forks and it was here that my father,
John Ormiston, was born. His mother died when he was a
baby so they had many hardships and later his father remar-
mied and moved to New Folden. The soil at New Folden was
rocky and not very good so when the boys were very young
they had to go out working to help earn money. When my
father was twelve years old, he started working on farms and
often walked from New Folden to Warren and East Grand
Forks to work in the harvest fields.

Wedding picture of John Ormiston and Hilda Henrickson. Attend-
ants, L. to R.: Freda Henrickson; Roy Swanson; Melvin Henrickson;
Libby Ormiston.

John Ormiston married the former Hilda Henrickson of
Sandsville Township, and they farmed there for their entire
lives. During the 1930’s life was not easy for anyone because of
the Depression, but I always felt that my parents had more
than their share of hardships. They lost their crop to hail, and
the wind blew their house off its foundation and killed all of
their turkeys and small chickens one year. Then a few years
later our home burned and we lost everything. I vividly
remember those following weeks when we didn’t even have a
dish towel or a wash cloth left. In spite of all these hardships,
I can not remember my parents complaining or getting discour-
aged. They must have been from good pioneer stock.

There were four girls in the Ormiston family: Margaret, the
oldest, now lives in Los Angeles, California; Irene, died when
she was three years old; Evelyn, that is I, is married to