Sullivan Township

CLARENCE AND INEZ AMUNDSON

Clarence and Inez Amundson are very active farmers and members of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church. Clarence serves on the board of directors of the First National Bank of East Grand Forks, the township board, and has served on the church board and many others.

Inez is a partner in the farming. She is the homemaker, active in church and 4-H Club leadership. They have two sons: Michael who is married (wife, Julia) and has a son (Michael Cris). Their home is also in the southeast quarter of section 18. Curtis is active in 4-H Club local, county and state and is active in church and in Senior High School. Both are active with their parents in the farming operations.

The farm consists of 760 acres owned by Clarence and Inez, who also rent 600 acres from Clarence’s brother (John), who has retired and lives in a mobile home on the farm. Certified seed potatoes and grain are grown on the farm today. At one time, cattle, chickens and hogs were raised.

Clarence’s grandfather (Amund Christianson) came to Renville county from Norway in 1878. He later left there and came to Polk county with a team of oxen and wagon and built a dugout on the banks of the Grand Marais in the southeast quarter of section 18, which he homesteaded. His son, Christian Amundson, (Clarence’s father) soon followed to Polk county from Norway. Christian bought the northwest quarter and part of the northeast quarter of section 18 from his father.

Christian Amundson married Sena Hotvedt of Rosholt, Wisconsin. Six children were born to them here on the farm: Eleanor, John, Alice, Harold, Clara, and Clarence. Clarence graduated from East Grand Forks High School and attended Northwest School of Agriculture at Crookston.

Many of Clarence’s mother’s family came from Rosholt, Wisconsin to Sullivan township and made their homes. Clarence married Inez McKenzie of Wimbledon, North Dakota. She was born at Kimball, Minnesota of early Minnesota settlers. Her mother’s parents came from Sweden in 1871. On her father’s sides, Grandfather McKenzie, came from Kentucky at the end of the Civil War. Grandmother McKenzie’s maiden name was Vadnas. The Vadnases came to the St. Paul area before St. Paul was a city. A Peter Vadnas owned the land where the State Capitol now stands. He traded this land for an oxen team and wagon saying all it was good for was trapping and he wanted to farm. Vadnas Lake was named for another Vadnas whose log house stood by the lake until a few years ago. Many relatives of both Clarence and Inez still live in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

THOMAS DRISCOLL

Although the icy winter winds blow chill, and the chimney smoke curls skyward, and the spring is late and dry, and the summer winds bring heat and drought, and the stubble fields gleam silver in the sunlight, and the autumn leaves crunch underfoot, there’s nothing like my valley home.

The Thomas Driscoll family grew to love their valley home. Thomas Driscoll (1879-1950) and his two daughters have rounded out 100 years on the same valley farm in 1979.

The time is a sunny day in April, 1879 and the place is Fisher’s Landing. A father and mother and five young husky sons reached their new home after a long tiresome trip from Almont, Ontario. Their immediate concern was shelter. After some confusion they loaded their household goods in a wagon, harnessed the horses and tied the cows to the wagon and set out for the Richard Enright home along the Red River, their only road. The mother, Mrs. Johanna Driscoll, and her husband James, bought a quarter of railroad land in section 33, in Sullivan township, for $400. Lumber was hauled from Fisher’s Landing, and a house was built on a hill overlooking the Grand Marais. This was at the insistence of Mrs. Driscoll. The first thing the father did was to buy oxen. The horses could not cope with the heavy grassy soil. Young willow trees, cottonwood and box elder were dug along the river. Potatoes and a garden were planted between the rows of trees. A transcendent crab apple tree which he planted still bears bushels of apples each year, and is at least 85 years old.

There were many problems such as, grasshoppers, blight, army worm and the mosquitoes, which plagued both man and beast. There were miles of walking behind the plows but these people were not dismayed. They had come from Ireland exhausted by scurvy, fever, malnutrition and a potato famine. This is why they left Ireland in 1849. One of the most tedious jobs of the women of 1890 was milking the cows out in the open, then cooling and skimming the cream from the milk. The cream was soured and churned in a tub or dash churn. The Irish had stories about the banshees who would prevent cream from turning to butter. The older women churned and smoked pipes as they churned.

A log barn was built the first fall. Logs were hauled from the banks of the Red River. In the winter a rope was strung from the house to the log barn so the people would find their way during the winter storms.

The original James and Johanna Driscoll home 1879

Johanna Ahearn Driscoll, the youngest of ten children, left County Kerry at the age of fourteen for America. It took six weeks and seven days to cross the Atlantic. At the age of nineteen she married James Driscoll at Almont, Ontario. James Driscoll came from Cork. An Irish priest told me they were known as great horsemen of Southern Ireland. This love of horses came with the Driscolls to Polk county as they had beautiful Percherons. Two of James’ brothers came with him. They were separated in New York and never saw each other again. In 1900, Mrs. Driscoll moved to East Grand Forks, where the present post office stands. A barn and chicken house stood at the back of the lot. In 1912 she passed away. Mr. Driscoll died in 1894 at age 90.

In 1898, Thomas married Mary Ellen Liston. Her mother, Maria Hogan Liston, came from Limerick. Her brother was a Brother at Notre Dame University. Maria spent two years at St. Mary’s, South Bend, and earned a teaching certificate. Thomas and Mary Ellen Driscoll have five children: Beatrice, a teacher; Vincent and Shanley, who each farmed a quarter in section 34, Shanley also worked at the Grand Forks school system and Vincent managed one of the Reynolds Aluminum Farms in Portland, Oregon. Angela has been a buyer at Dayton’s for many years. Marie kept the home fires burning. Mrs. Driscoll died in 1919 and Thomas Driscoll passed away in 1950 at age 87. During his lifetime he served for many years on the township and school boards. But the heritage this pioneer left us can be summed up this way: personal integrity, honesty, determination, a love of the land, good stewardship and faith in God and his fellow man.

IVER HOYE

Mr. and Mrs. Iver Hoye moved to section 8, Sullivan township, in 1895. They had previously lived in Northland township, Honeyford, North Dakota, and in Winneshiek county, Iowa. They were both born in Norway, but left there in 1878