East Polk County

IVER AMUNDSON

Iver Amundson and Syerverine Belden were married at McIntosh, Minnesota, Polk County, on March 2, 1896, by F. S. Reishus, Lutheran pastor. Iver was born in Nordland, Norway, on June 24, 1865, of parents Amund and Aletta Sofjord, Vestaalen. Since he was a son of Amund his name became Amundson. Syerverine Belden was born in Hadeland, Norway, on July 10, 1874, of parents Gulbrand and Anne Hagen, who changed their name to Belden after arriving in America. They lived in a two-room log house, which was later enlarged. To this union ten children were born: Oscar; Anna, Mrs. Soren Smith; Gustav; Helen, Mrs. Gilbert Fosse; Godfred; Mabel, Mrs. Alfred Gravos; Ingeman; Otto; Eunice, Mrs. Vincent Rhodes; and Roald. They had 23 grandchildren. All the children were born and raised on the 160-acre farm in Badger township about five miles north of Erskine. The Amundsons were charter members of Saron Lutheran church where all their children have been baptized and confirmed.

Iver was active in community affairs, being a member of township, school and church boards. He was custodian of Saron church for many years, serving without salary, as his special service to the Lord.

In January, 1908, Iver met with a painful accident, which nearly cost him his life. While sawing wood with a circular saw with the help of neighbors at his home, he slipped on the ice and his right knee cap was cut badly. After suffering many weeks at a Crookston hospital, he returned to his home with a stiff knee. Later he got around as well as anyone.

Another disaster which took place on his birthday, June 24, 1947, was a tornado which destroyed most of the farm buildings. Fortunately they saw it coming, so they lay down under some low bushes and plum trees, where nothing happened to fall. Iver talked often about watching the barn taken up and exploding all over the place. Many animals were killed and machinery smashed. Much of the contents of the second floor of the farm house were scattered over a wide area. How they appreciated the help of kind friends and neighbors at times like that!

On their farm, the Amundsons raised cattle, hogs and chickens, oats, barley and hay and a large garden. They also kept bees and honey was a welcome substitute in the sugar shortage during the first World War. Eggs and cream supplied most of the money for groceries and clothing, much of which was purchased at the little country store at Cisco, and at T. K. Berges at Erskine.

Mr. Amundson never drove a car, but often talked about earlier pioneer days when he and neighbors walked to Crookston and back, to get necessities. This was a distance of 45 miles. What an advantage when later they owned oxen and horses. In spite of hardships and privation, theirs was a happy home! The doors were always open for friends and neighbors, church groups such as Ladies Aid, choirs and prayer meetings. All were welcome especially in winter when it was not practical to heat the church. They never owned keys for their doors.

Mrs. Amundson's hobby was raising flowers. Many of her lovely bouquets found their way to sick neighbors, and to the church at funerals. When young, she had studied dress-making, which came in handy with so much sewing to do. She corded and spun wool into yarn and knitted all the socks and mittens for the family. She was never known to sit down to rest without her knitting. All the children learned to read Norwegian before starting school.

Mr. Amundson passed away in 1939, and his wife in 1945. They were buried near Saron Lutheran church.

A. G. CAYLER

Allen G. Thurman Cayler settled in Polk County in 1903. He was born in Webster County, Iowa, in 1876. He traveled to Northwestern Minnesota from Iowa in a covered wagon pulled by a team of horses and leading a saddle horse. He made his living by farming, digging wells and threshing. He loved to work with gas engines and steam threshing rigs. He later worked for the Great Northern Railroad at the Crookston roundhouse repairing steam locomotives.

He was married to Laura Louise Mitchell in 1909. Laura Mitchell was a school teacher and was born in Woodside township, a daughter of Henry G. Mitchell. Mr. and Mrs. Cayler raised a family of four children: Myrtle Grace, the oldest, married Russell Moline of Lansing, Iowa. Allen, the second child, married Marian Rude, a daughter of the Martin Rudes. Marian died, leaving a family of six small children, five boys and one girl. Allen now lives in Alpena, Michigan. Russell, the third child, lives at Mentor, Minnesota, and Donald, the fourth, lives at Erskine, Minnesota.

Mr. Cayler died in 1954. Mrs. Cayler is 90 years old and lives at Riverview Nursing Home in Crookston. Mrs. Cayler has 32 great-grandchildren and 14 grandchildren.

When I was very young, we lived on a farm approximately ten miles north of Crookston. Mother made a lot of butter and took it to town with a horse and buggy, taking my brother and me along. One time a car came up behind us frightening the horse, so that she jumped toward the water-filled ditch but, luckily, we stayed upright.
Donald Cayler with two of his work horses.

My father used to dig out fox cubs in the fields bringing them home in a gunny sack. He kept them in a cage and it was my task to feed them milk and bread. Often hunters of prairie chickens went by the farm and left a chicken at the house.

When we moved to Crookston after World War I, there were many interesting things happening.

I used to watch, with wonder, the electric cars going soundlessly by. What a magnificent sight the beautifully groomed galloping horses made pulling the fire wagon. I remember the eerie sound of the fire siren the first time it was blown.

What fun it was to ride on a hand sled that was pulled behind the ice sleigh. We rode back and forth between the river and the ice house. The ice was sawed in blocks and stored in the icehouse for delivery to customers throughout Crookston

DUNRUD

Six generations of Dunruds have lived in Polk County and worshipped in Zion Lutheran church of rural Fosston, Minnesota.

The first generation was, Ole and Marit Dunrud from Sandrift, Gudbrandsdal, Norway. They came to America in 1882 with their five children to Ottertail County. They lived there two years and then came to the “13 Towns” area where they homesteaded in Brandsvold Township with their son Ole. Later this was owned by Ole and Kari, now the Larry Juve farm. Hans and Mathea Haugen homesteaded joined on the south, Anne and Kristian on the west. Others who homesteaded in Eden Township were Peter and Anna Engenretson, Lena and Trone Movold and also Marit’s sister, the Lova Hagen family.

All families helped form the congregation and build the first log church. Anne Dunrud and Kristian Letrud were married in Norway in 1880. They came to Ottertail county in 1882 to homestead in 1884. The brush was so thick where they stopped the wagon that it had to be cut before they could set a little stove down to cook or do anything. All they owned was a cow that liked to roam. They had much heavy labor in cutting logs to build a cabin and a small barn. They needed wood for heat and lumber to make furniture.

Olaf was born December 25, 1884 and as the years went by they had Martin, Lena, Carl, Selmer, Edwin (deceased) and Edna.

The land had to be cleared so it could be plowed with a walking plow. Wolves were howling everywhere. Anne churned butter, made Pult-ost, gameleost, prem-ost and sold it to stores. She also carded and spun wool for mittens and socks for the family and also to sell to stores.

Many bums would come begging for food. She would feed them and give them a place in the barn to sleep.

Anne served as mid-wife. She delivered over eighty babies with very little or no pay. She visited and had prayer with the old and sick neighbors and baptized the weak babies. Anne and Kristian were active church people. They always walked to church. Kristian served as superintendent and taught Sunday school. Anne served as President of Zion Ladies Aid for seventeen years and as Vice President for seven years.

Selmer M. Dunrud married Hulda Tverberg and lived and farmed in partnership with his father until 1918. Then they moved to a farm north of Gonvick to make their home. In the winter he would work with a few neighbors to cut ice blocks.

These he would haul on flat-racks to the Creamery and the meat market at Gonvick.

In 1922, he moved to the Hans Evje farm to help his sister whose husband passed away. He lived there seventeen years, with his family of five children; Alice, Adella, Opal, Kenneth (deceased) and Harry.

Selmer moved back to his father’s homestead in 1939 and lived there for thirty-five years until his death in 1973. His youngest son, Harry, is now the owner. Alice Dunrud married Alf Roland of Alax, North Dakota at Zion Lutheran in Fosston and lives in Eden Township with their five children; Marlo, Anne Marie, Wesley and twins Harvey and Harriet. Alf served with the army before he came to Minnesota to farm. Marlo served with the Navy for nineteen years. They have two children; Jonathan and Danielle who are of the sixth generation of the Dunruds.

JOHN HELGAAS

John Helgaas was born in Sondfjord, Norway, near the post office of Nesdal in 1884. His parents were Cornelius and Pernela (Mildeohl) Helgaas. Sondfjord was a fjord of water running between mountains, while Nesdal was on higher ground. John was eight years old when his mother crossed the ocean with him by boat to join his father in America in 1893. He had spent three years preparing for their coming. They were eleven days on the Atlantic Ocean.

John’s father settled on a farm in Garden township, section sixteen, five miles from where he now lives. One sister, Maria, who was in poor health, was left in Norway with friends. Others born into his family in America were Olivia, Mrs. Peder Carlsson; Albert, deceased; Ole, Fertile; Mrs. Adolph, deceased; and Andrew, died at four years of age.

At nine years of age, John started out to work on a three-thousand-acre farm in North Dakota. In the fall he found work in a logging camp near Virginia, Minnesota. The following spring, he returned to the farm in North Dakota. Unhappy with the rough characters in the bunkhouse, he quit and returned to North Dakota and hired out, shocking grain for a German family for $5 a day. He ran a steamer during threshing for six years every fall before getting married. Each winter John returned to Northern Minnesota logging camp. His last winter in the woods was in 1916, just before he was married.

John married Clara Bennes on December 16, 1916. He purchased eighty acres in 1921 in Garden township with eighty acres adjoining in Winger township. John started building a house May 1, 1921. They lived in a cook car and the carpenter slept in the granary. They moved into their home June 25, and then built the stable. They made their living with grain, cows, pigs and chickens.

Clara was the daughter of Lars and Julia (Edson) Bennes. Clara died May 4, 1971. Her family were: Elmer (deceased), Albert (deceased), Ingvold (deceased), Ida (Mrs. John Achting), Fertile, Minnesota; Ed (deceased), and Josie, (Mrs. Shan Armstrong), Cody, Wyoming.

This family of John and Clara consists of four children: Kenneth, who married Clarice Sandberg and had three children: Phyllis, Mrs. Emzily Sturre; Judy, Mrs. Terry
JENS JENSON

The seaport of Malmo, Sweden was a busy place in 1891. A big ship was about to take off for America and aboard was my mother, Agnes and her family, the Niels Larsens. Mother was only eight years old but she remembered the trip well. They went to southern Minnesota at first and in 1896 took a homestead northwest of Mentor. Grandma Larsen died in 1899 and is buried at Broderheim cemetery between Erskine and Mentor. Mother walked to Broderheim many times so she could be confirmed. It was a six-mile hike or more. In the meantime my father, Jens Jensen, born in 1883 in Vestervig, Denmark, was seventeen years of age and left from Copenhagen for America never to see his parents, brother, three sisters or homeland again. He came to Mentor where his brother, Ole and sister, Mrs. Nels Madsen lived. He met and was married to Agnes Larsen on December 16, 1905, at Maple Bay by Rev. Lunds. To this union were born seven children, all living. They are: Ferdinand, Lawton, Oklahoma; Mrs. Norman Sorbo (Blenda), Lake Stevens, Washington; Pastor Vernon Jensen, Shakopee, Minnesota: Mrs. A. W. Bock (Esther), Seattle, Washington; Mrs. Albert Lund (Helen), Foston, Minnesota; Mrs. Arnold Berg (Dolores), Thief River Falls, Minnesota; and Mrs. James Anderson (Mila), Renton, Washington. When my Dad bought the Abbott farm around 1908, three miles west of Mentor, the owner didn't think he'd be able to pay for it, but he did and kept it during the depression also. With the Great Northern tracks on one side of our house and the old number 8 highway to Crookston on the other, we never lacked for excitement. There were gypsies and hobos in abundance. Mother would tell stories of how they hitched up the horse and buggy and went town or visiting. They seemed to have more time than we with all of our modern conveniences.

Roads weren't always the best. Our school bus was a horse-drawn canvas covered affair. During cold weather foot warmers were used. When the roads became impassable with snow drifts, a cutter took us to school. By 1925, when roads permitted, our school bus became a Ford with curtains for windows. What luxury! We made it, though, as all seven of us graduated from Mentor High School. My oldest brother went to country school southwest of our farm for Clara Moland. Mentor consolidated in 1911, being the first school district to do so in our area. My dad served on the Mentor school board, also. There was some excitement at our place when we got our brand new model "T" Ford. It even had real glass windows! Impossible to start in winter, it would be put up on blocks; and the brakes weren't too reliable either. Ask my sister Helen about when she drove into the garage one day! Thrashing days were more memorable. The abundant food, the excitement of neighbors helping out and the good crops Dad was so proud of. His hard work usually paid off.

America is great because of its religious heritage. I'll always be thankful my folks became Christians and were both active in church work. Dad was superintendent of the Sunday school for many years at Mentor Lutheran Church now Faith Lutheran.

After nearly forty years on the farm they moved to the Knutson house in Mentor. The Herb Monsons live there now. Dad died January 3, 1949, and Mother April 16, 1967. Both are laid to rest in Rosehill Cemetery close to the farm they loved so much.

SOREN PETER AND TEOLINE JORGENSEN

Lars Peter Jorgenson and Elsie Marie Jorgenson were the parents of Soren Peter Jorgenson. Both were born in Denmark and married in Denmark. Lars' parents are buried in Saron. Their names were Jorgen Peterson and Karen Marie.

Lars' sister, Mrs. Jacobson, also came to America, and she was called "Grandma" by Soren's children. She died one day and Kenny was born the next day, or just the reverse, so there was always a wonder which day was Kenny's birthday.

Soren Peter Jorgenson was born November 10, 1875. Other siblings were: Martin, Christ, Karen Marie, Christine and Peter. Soren was born at White Water, Wisconsin. He was the oldest child. They moved up north to Erskine. The first day of school, Soren went with his lunch box. When he got there he couldn't get the door open so he left and went home again. He married Teoline Gundersen on May 1, 1899. Soren was a harness and shoe repair man. His shop burned in 1921 and after that they started a restaurant. There were ten children: Martin David, born October 3, 1899; Julia Florence (Nellermoe) born March 26, 1901; Agnes Teoline (Kise) born December 28, 1902; Mayme Lenora (Erickson) born February 2, 1905; Pearl Berdette born January 22, 1907; Grace Lillian (Erickson) born May 11, 1909; Orvid Soren born December 27, 1911; the twins, Clara Marie (Donehower) and Carl Martinus born September 15, 1914; and Paul Clarence Marcellus born January 30, 1917 and known to his family as Kenny. Soren returned to shoe and harness repair in the 1920's. He passed away February 27, 1953 at Detroit Lakes, Minnesota and is buried in Fairview cemetery at Erskine.

Teoline Gundersen Bye was born October 6, 1878 near Bergen, Norway to Martha Gunderson and (first name unknown) Gunderson. She came to America when she was two years old. They settled near Hickson, North Dakota. Mr. Gunderson came first and sent for his family. I think it was six weeks when they came he got scarlet fever and died. Shortly after, a twin son fell from a hay rack while haying and broke his neck. The Gundersons were Petra, Carl (a twin) and Teoline. There were
others as Martha Gunderson had two sets of twins. Martha then married John Bye and they had Clara (Mrs. Swan Hans- son) and Maurice. They moved to a farm west of Erskine between two lakes. They didn’t know they had neighbors until one night when Carl was outside, he heard someone calling, “Come Boss” from across the lake. They then rowed over and met their neighbors, the Ness family. Often the family was visited by Indians, especially at mealtime, and the mother, Mar- tha, would give them the family dinner. Teoline Gunderson Bye Jorgenson died March 24, 1953 in Detroit Lakes, Minne- sota and is buried in Fairview cemetery at Erskine.

SIMON AND ANNE KROKEN

Among the early pioneers of Rosebud township, near Fos- ton, were my maternal grandparents, Simon and Anne Kro- ken. Both were born in Norway and following their marriage there, they immigrated in 1880 to the United States, first sett- ing in Otter Tail county, Minnesota. Two years later, in 1882, they traveled to Foston by oxcart. They were accompanied by Grandfather’s two brothers, Edward Nordhus and Martin Tangen and their families. All settled on adjoining farms just east of Foston. Simon, who was born in Ehestad, Norland, Norway, died October 18, 1933, at Foston at age 84. His wife, Anne Knudsdater, who was born August 1, 1859, in Opedahl, Norway, died in Foston August 2, 1936 at 77. Anne Kroken also had a sister here. She was Miss Christine Myrbo, who died February 17, 1938, at Bemidji, where she lived at the home of her nephew, Ingbreth Kroken. Earlier she had spent several years employed in the Crookston area.

Seven children were born to the Krokens. They were Mrs. Frank (Mayme) Johnson, Foston and Crookston; Conrad, Foston; Henry, Los Angeles: Edwin, Chicago: Ingbreth, Bem- idji; Mrs. Matt (Christine) Snyder and Mrs. Henry (Anna) Eastvold, both of Crookston. All are deceased except Mayme Johnson, now 92, who is living at Foston at the Midway Boarding Home.


In 1903 Carl decided to homestead his own farm, he staked his claim and rode all the way to Crookston on a bicycle. He beat another fellow by a few minutes, who has also filed on the same land. Carl had filed at 9:00 A.M. November 10, 1903 and Ole A. Olson had filed at 9:23 A.M. Carl lived for a while as a bachelor, but cupid soon interrupted.

Carl started farming with a team of oxen named Spot and Star. He also was seen plowing with a mule, a horse and an ox. This must have been a trying experience. Land clearing was one of the hard chores of the homesteaders. All the grubbing was by hand. In 1910 Carl obtained a coal hauling contract with the Doyle Company that was digging the State Ditch #11 near Oklee, Minnesota. For this contract he was to receive $1.10 a ton hauling them from Gully to Oklee. This contract was never paid. Carl had hired an extra man and team, so he had to pay for this hire out of his own pocket. Carl and Hilda were also charter members of the Sand Valley Lutheran church at Trail, Minnesota. Carl also served as secretary of the Trail Cooperative Creamery from 1923 to 1952.

To the union of Carl and Hilda were born the following: Thor Carston who farmed and hauled cattle in Trail area. He bought the farm his grandfather Thore had homesteaded. Thor married Anne Moy and they have two children: Lyle now living on home farm and Patsy, married to Darrell Fin- seth. Henry Gustav farmed in Trail area all his life. He bought the land farmed by his Uncle Ole. He married Myrtle Krogh and they have one daughter, Rosemary Eskelie. Mabel Doro- thy died of spinal T.B. in 1915 at age of eight years. Alf Otto farmed and worked in Trail area all his life. Alf Otto married Ingalla Halvorson. They have two children, Valerie Fritz and Virginia Barstad. Hans Magnus worked as a teacher and with the Federal Prison Services. He lives in Milan, Michigan. Hans married Delores Dahlgren and they have three children, Jean Bowles, Jerry and Carol. Arthur Melvin died of pneumonia in 1929 at age of 12. Martin Carl taught school at Graffton, North Dakota and was soil conservationist at Grand Forks, North Dakota from 1944 to present. He married Edith Hodny and they have children Judith Bradwell, Frances Corbit, and Kath- leven Ayaz. Mabel Dorothy served as army nurse during World War II. She married William Turner and had children Wil- liam, Mary Fischer, and Robert. In her second marriage to Philip Schmit, she had five sons and one daughter. Gladys Wilma worked as a nurse in San Francisco and married Don- ald Hughes. They have five children: Susan, Tony, Karen, Allen and Heather.


MARKUS MARKUSON

“Kan Du Glemme Gamle Norge?” could have been the theme song of both my maternal and paternal grandparents as they reminisce about their early days in their homeland, Nor- way. My maternal grandfather, Markus Gaasvigen, later known as Markus Markuson, was born in Norway in 1845. His wife, Juliana Clausen, was born in 1849. After having married and started a family, they along with two daughters, Gusta, 13, and Tena, 7, started on their long voyage to America, the land
of opportunity. They settled first in southern Minnesota from where they came north and homesteaded in Polk County in Badger township west of Erskine. They farmed for many years. The two eldest girls left the nest and were married. Gusta became Mrs. Henry Norveson, and she and her husband, Henry and ten children lived in Montana and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Tena married John Rakstad and they lived in Duluth.

The Markusons had three more children. My mother, Olga, (1884) married my father, Olai Skiple, in 1913. My brother, Arnold and I were their children. There were also Emma Markuson, who lived in Erskine, and Sam (1889), who married Tillie Thereaux of Crookston. They lived in Minneapolis. They had two daughters.

The Markson family closed its book of activities in 1960, with my mother's passing. They lived a so-called normal life, participating in Church, school, and civic affairs of that day. My paternal ancestry dates back to this grandfather, Hendrick Skiple, formerly known as Hendrick Elevenhom, who was born in Norway in 1849. At nineteen years of age, he, with three brothers and two sisters, headed for America. They settled first near Webster, in Rice County. While living there he met his wife-to-be, Gunda Elmelie Olson, who with her family had left Norway in 1869, at the age of four. She was a sickly child whom they feared would never survive the rough voyage. However, she lived to be 94 and out-lived them all!

Times were hard and money was scarce, so Gunda hired out as a farm laborer working as a man, tying grain into bundles, caring for animals, etc. Later, she worked in Northfield, where she witnessed the Jesse James bank robbery. These families came up to Polk County, in 1883. My grandparents were married in 1884, near Mentor in Badger township. When they homesteaded, they engaged in farming, and their first house was a sod shanty. It was cold and dark and drafty, but it did keep out the wolves! They definitely started from scratch, making the tools and implements that today are "antiques." If they had only known the value they would attain in our day, they wouldn't have thrown a thing away.

Poverty and illness were prevalent. There was neither welfare nor food stamps nor Medicare. Everyone was on his own, to sink or swim. I remember my grandmother telling of walking to Crookston, over twenty-five miles as the crow flies, to trade eggs for flour and sugar. Their dread fear was that of meeting hostile Indians, who might harm them and rob them.

They had ten children of which eight were born. The oldest was Olai, my father, born in 1885. He married my mother, Olga Markuson, in 1913. There were four more sons: Bennie (1887) married Mabel Ness. They lived near Mentor and had two children. He passed away in 1975. Helmer (1890) died at age eight years. Ludvig (1892) married Inga Sevolrud, and they are still living in Erskine. John (1901) married Hilda Pederson of Perley, Minnesota. They live in Covina, California and have three daughters. Two girls were also born to this family. They were Emelie (1895) who was married to John Strand; they had four sons. After his death, she was married to Ernest Kraft. Helma (1879) was another daughter, who was quite well known as a parochial school teacher. She married Mikkel Homme of Winger and they had two children. He was killed in a tractor accident, and some years later she married Oscar Snustad. They are residing at the Foston Municipal Nursing Home.

I remember my parents as being hard working, devoutly religious people, to whom their community, church and school meant a great deal. Their education was of necessity limited, and they were very determined that my brother, Arnold, and I should have an education. They took an active part in Brederheim church activities, holding several offices. Now they are both resting from their labors in that church yard. They farmed in Grove Park township near Mentor, until they retired and moved to McIntosh, where my mother passed away in 1960. While farming, my dad was clerk of the townboard for many years. He spent his declining years near Fertile, and was a resident of Fair Meadow Nursing Home when he passed on in 1974.

Many changes have taken place since these loved ones strived to build up the community. Their work shall not be in vain, if we do our best to follow in their footsteps, standing up for the things we hold dear and feel are right. My brother, Arnold Skiple, of Clearbrook, who is married to Helen Rydeen, and is the father of two sons, and I am proud of our ancestry. I am Mrs. Alvin Bolstad (Evelyn) of Fertile, and we have five children, who feel they are fortunate to have such solid citizens as ancestors.

HENRY GORDON MITCHELL

Henry Mitchell came to the Red River Valley in the early days and was one of the two oldest pioneers in the entire northwest. He was a Civil War hero. He wrote considerably and retold many experiences of early pioneer days in the Valley. He was born in West Granville, Massachusetts, March 23, 1847. He went to war in 1863 with Company E, 2nd Connecticut regiment, heavy artillery. In an engagement at Cold Harbor he was wounded by a "minnie ball" and detailed to special duty with the regiment until honorably discharged at Fort Ethan Allen, Virginia, August 10, 1865. He was a carpenter by trade and a farmer. Grandfather Mitchell was raised by Puritan parents. He told about reading the Bible from sun-up to sun-down and being allowed to do nothing else on Sunday when he was a child.

Henry Mitchell's wife, Melvina Hickerson, was born at River Falls, Wisconsin, and raised on a farm between Rush City and Pine City, Minnesota. They were married in 1874 at Rush City. They raised a family of eight children: Guf; Rufus; Laura, Mrs. A. G. Cayler of Crookston; Ida; Roy; Etta; Grace of Mentor, Minnesota and Ruth. Laura and Grace are the surviving members of the family. We can remember Grandfather Mitchell telling about coming to La Crosse, Wisconsin, by train from the East after being discharged from the army. From La Crosse, he took the steamboat up the Mississippi to St. Paul, as there was no railroad from La Crosse at that time. From there, he traveled by ox team, skis, snowshoes, on foot, or whatever was handy. Henry came to Polk County in 1878. He homesteaded in Woodside township in 1881, and moved his family there from Crookston, in 1884. His first home was a log cabin covered with elm bark and shingled with shakes. Shakes are a type of shingle made from short lengths of logs, split in narrow widths and thin thickness.

Grandmother told about having Indian callers and also of a bear coming to the house. My mother told about going to school through the woods on a sleigh pulled by oxen.

During the winter at times when snow was deep, Grandfather was known to travel by snowshoe to Crookston for his and his neighbor's mail. The trip took two days each way with a stop at the half-way house, now Marcoux corner. Much hard work was done to carve out a home in the forest. The Mitchell home was known as "Forest Home" and remained in the family until 1972. Henry Mitchell was one of the founders of the Mentor Creamery and did much to promote the development of Maple Lake as a summer resort. He was active in township affairs and held several public offices. He died December 8, 1931.

REV. LARS J. NJUS

Lars J. Njus was born in Leikanger, Sogn, Norway, on December 6, 1870, of parents Johannes O. and Mettele L. Njus. He was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran faith in Norway, where he also attended Sognadal's high school from 1887 to 1888. In 1888, at the age of eighteen he came to the United States, swept up in what was described as "America Fever."
vacating a state which saw the heaviest migration from Norway. In the locality of Sogn as early as 1854, it was said that nearly every family had relatives in the United States.

Upon arrival in America, Lars Njus journeyed to the region where most Scandinavians lived. He stayed for some years in the vicinity of Garretson, South Dakota, working for potato farmers for three cents a day, board and room included. From 1890 to 1893, he attended Sioux Falls Lutheran Normal School, a one-building school perched on the prairie. It still exists as part of the 100-acre campus of Augustana College. Upon graduation, he taught school for several years before entering Luther Seminary in St. Paul. In 1901, he was ordained into the Lutheran ministry.

His first calling as a pastor was at Lakesfield, Minnesota and later he served at Atwater and Grove City, Minnesota. He came to McIntosh, Polk County, in 1905 where he served faithfully for seventeen years. He served St. Luke’s at McIntosh, Sandhill in Sletten Township, Sannes at Erskine as well as Mentor, Minnesota. In summer he drove with horse and buggy and in the winter with a two-seated cutter.

For the next several years beginning in 1922, he played an important role in developing one of the largest Norwegian American newspapers, the Decorah Posten, out of Decorah, Iowa. As associate editor until 1929, he translated English works into Norwegian, wrote editorials and edited. Later, upon returning to the Red River Valley, Pastor Njus made an unsuccessful bid for Polk County treasurer, running against Pauline Lindberg, Mrs. Frank Lohn.

In 1917, Rev. Njus aided in the development of merging three major Lutheran bodies to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. He and his brother, Rev. Nils Njus of Benson, Minnesota (another pioneer pastor) were also among the original members of the fraternal insurance society named Luther Union, a life insurance union designed for retiring Lutheran pastors. That company is now the well known Lutheran Brotherhood Insurance Company. Rev. Nils Njus holds policy number sixteen and at the age of 100 still outlives his policy. Pastor Njus was also a respected poet and essayist. An article in the McIntosh Times dated August 8, 1922 states: “He has contributed much to Norwegian literature in America. His productions in poetry and essays written for conferences and journals have been duly recognized. Rev. Njus wrote a number of poems, essays and short stories which were published in a Norwegian Christmas magazine entitled "Jul i Vesterheimen".

In 1902, Lars Njus married Susie Johnson, who died in 1910. On June 11, 1912, he married Ingeborg, a native of Albert Lea, Minnesota. They had five children, the youngest of whom died at the age of eight. The oldest, Ingmar, died in 1973, at the age of sixty. One daughter, Mrs. Melvin Moe (Mathilde) is a resident of Polk County. Her son, Roger Moe of Ada, is Minnesota State Senator for District 2. Rev. Njus was one of many pioneer pastors whose influence helped shape the moral character and influenced the social and political life of their era!

EDWARD AND RANDI NORDHUS
For their honeymoon, following their marriage January 4, 1880, in Norway, Edward and Randi Nordhus emigrated from Norland, Norway to the United States and the Fergus Falls area of Minnesota. Accompanying them were his two brothers, Simon Kroken and Martin Tangen. I was told they took their names from places they were employed. The former Randi (Olssdatter) Vigen and Edvard Ingebretsen (Nordhus) were married by M. L. Foshaug at Trondhjem, Norway. He was born at Bardu, northern Norway in 1854, and she was born in 1856 at Trondhjem, Norway. They sailed from Norway May 8, 1880. In 1882, the Nordhus, Tangen and Kroken families traveled from Fergus Falls by oxcart to Fosston, where they all settled on farms in Rosebud township, just east of Fosston.

The Nordhus family then included a daughter, Petra (Maud), born November 3, 1881, who later became Mrs. Oscar W. Anderson of Crookston, wife of a longtime Great Northern Railway brakeman. She died March 3, 1938. (See history under their name.) A son, Ingvold was born December 13, 1883, at Fosston. He died February 15, 1948, at Havre, Montana and is buried at Harlem, Montana. He never married. Ingvold was a carpenter. Marie, born June 16, 1886, was married at Crookston in 1905 to Otto Rasmussen. She died November 4, 1965, in Crookston. (See history under Rasmussen). Olaf (Albert E.) born August 1, 1888, and died November 25, 1956, at Kalispell, Montana. He is buried at Columbia Falls, Montana. He was married to Lily Martha Johnson of Gonvick, June 5, 1911. There were three children, Kermit was born June 5, 1912 and died in 1945 at Hoquiam, Washington, in a bus accident. Glenn was born February 1913, and died in Crookston in 1920; Lorraine Mae, born in 1928, died July 4, 1930, at Mineral, Washington. Olaf was a barber. John Bendik was born August 3, 1890 and died May 30, 1952, in Minneapolis. He was married June 7, 1916, to Hilda Hasselon at Fosston. They had no children. He was employed by the Jensen Printing Company in Minneapolis.

Eleven years after moving to Fosston, tragedy struck the


Nordhus family in 1893, when the father died April 23, followed by the mother on November 6. In the November 10, 1893, issue of the Fosston Thirteen Towns newspaper the following appears: “The circumstances connected with Mrs. Nordhus’ death are very sad. On the 21st of last April her husband met his death from consumption and ever since then, Mrs. Nordhus has been rapidly following him, afflicted with the same fatal disease, which ultimately took her life. Deceased is well known in this neighborhood and much sympathy is felt for the five young children, the oldest of whom is only eleven years, the youngest only three, who are now left both fatherless and motherless. The funeral took place on Wednesday, services being held at the Conference Church.”

School records still in existence from the Moen school in Rosebud township, dated 1896, list: "Marie Nordhus, 10, and Olaf, 8, as students there with Ida Moen as the teacher." The Moen school was long used in that capacity until recently when it became the town hall.
The Nordhus farm home later became the residence of daughter, Marie, the Otto Rasmussen, where their two children, Maybelle and Kermit were born. Cousins of Marie, the Oscar Tangen family later lived there and it is presently known as the Sidney Fjerstad residence.

**OLE O. NORMAN**

My father Ole Norman was born in Voss, Norway and came to America in 1853 when he was nine years old. My mother Ingeborg Aune Sorensen was born at Storbukt, near Tromso, Norway and came to America in 1861 when she was twelve years old.

At the age of nineteen years my father Ole Olesen III Norman enlisted in Company B Second Minnesota Cavalry the fourth day of December 1863. He signed to serve three years or for the duration of the Civil War. They traveled westward on Minnesota territory and fought at Killdor Mountain, northwest of Dickinson, North Dakota, now Clarks Ranch. Father's horse and two fellow soldiers were killed. One acre of the ranch is reserved in their memory.

He married my mother when he came back from service, March 12, 1866. With the four hundred dollars in gold he had earned in the Army he purchased a farm at Norseland near St. Peter, Minnesota. They farmed here for several years. Several children were born at Norseland; five died within a week during a diphtheria epidemic. Grief stricken the parents decided to move. My parents and three children Andrew, Christine and Ida moved to Ada, Minnesota in 1883.

A short time later my parents moved to a homestead three miles southeast of Winger. However, there were two squatters on the same land so my father sold his rights to Hans Vik and moved back to Ada in 1885.

In the winter of 1907, father again filed on a claim in Billings County, North Dakota. Later Billings County was divided into three counties; namely, Slope, Golden Valley and Woodbury. Our equipment was shipped to Belfield, North Dakota which was thirty-five miles north of the claim. We had to build the house and hauled the lumber from Dickenson, North Dakota a trek of fifty miles. Several of the homesteaders were from Twin Valley, Minnesota. My father sold the claim in December 1915 and the family moved to Fosston in 1916.

I was born on the Christian Skarud farm February 18, 1895. I am the only survivor of the family. I attended school in District 43, Strand Township. Ida Melaas was my first teacher (1902-1903). There were forty-one pupils. I finished the first six grades in District 43 and graduated from eighth grade in North Dakota. I attended high school at Bowman, North Dakota. I stayed at lawyer, Judge Diehl’s home and worked for board and room. I attended Valley City Normal from 1914 to 1915. I taught the home school in Woodbury 1915-1916; took a two year teacher’s training course which I completed in one year and summer school.

I came back to Minnesota and married Alfred Fishbeck on January 21, 1921. We have lived on his grandfather’s (Doud) homestead for fifty-five years. We raised turkeys and my husband also had a milk route and was a school bus driver. Now at eighty-six years he loves his garden and flowers. My hobbies are painting, photography and quilting.

We have three children: Roderick, Glenn, and Julie Ann. Roderick is Project Engineer at Philco-Ford in Pennsylvania. Glenn lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Julie Ann lives in Maple Plain, Minnesota. Each family has two children.

My parents lived in Fosston for twenty years. They passed away in 1936 at the age of 92 and 86. They are buried in the Kingo Church cemetery. They were members of the Lutheran Free Church for twenty years.

My sister, Ida, married Christian S. Bjelde who was born in Norway. They lived at Marion, Minnesota where he was a grain buyer for the elevator. He also worked at Gary, Minnesota. In the year 1909 they moved to Olga, northeast of Fosston, Minnesota where he purchased a general store which they operated for many years.

They had eight children. Evelyn married Hermanson and taught school for twenty-three years. Isla married Hornback and cooked in school cafeteria for many years. Sadie and Lloyd are both employed. Clifford, Archie, Frances and Bertha are deceased.

I am thankful for my parents and remember their words of Wisdom. Mother said, “We must not fail God’s words” (Vi maa ikke forsorme Guds ord.) Father would say, “I pray for all of you” (Jeg ber for disse alle).

**OTTO AND MARIE RASMUSSEN**

My brother, Kermit E. Rasmussen and I have always made special emphasis and are proud of the fact we were born in the same rural home as our mother on the eastern outskirts of Fosston in Rosebud township. It later was owned by a cousin, Oscar Tangen and family and presently known as the Sidney Fjerstad residence.

Our mother was the former Marie Nordhus, born June 16, 1886, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Nordhus. She was the third child in the family of five, who came to Fosston by oxcart from Fergus Falls. They brought with them their eldest daughter, Petra (Maud) born November 3, 1881, who became Mrs. Oscar W. Anderson of Crookston. (See Nordhus and Anderson histories).

Tragedy struck the family when my mother, Marie, was only seven years old. An early-day disease, known as consumption, took her father April 23, 1893; he was followed six months later on November 6, by her mother.

After the death of their parents the young Nordhus children were sort of farmed out and Mom came to Crookston as a young girl to work as a waitress. Here she met my father, Otto Rasmussen, a native of Denmark, who came to Minnesota at age seventeen. He was born December 21, 1876, in Nørre Jylland, Denmark. At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, my father enlisted and served with Company G., 34th United States Volunteer Infantry during the Philippine Insurrection in the Philippine Islands. Almost fifty years later, in 1945, my brother, Kermit was to end his service in World War
KONGSVINGER CHURCH

The history of the Kongsvinger congregation dates back to 1880, when pastor Bersvend Anderson led a small group of Norwegian and Swedish immigrants in worship in their sod and log homes. They traveled from Bardo, nine miles west of Crookston, Minnesota. On November 21, 1880, this group met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hendrickson, and with the help of Pastor Anderson organized the congregation. The following are the names of the first church members: Mr. and Mrs. Hendrik H. Grub, Mr. and Mrs. Ole Hendrickson and family, Mr. Hendrik Henderson, Miss Bretta Hendrickson, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hendrickson and family, Mr. and Mrs. Otto Sevein, Mr. and Mrs. Anders Skog and family, Miss Anna Skog, Mr. Ole Lundeen, Mr. and Mrs. Hendrik Flataas. Pastor Anderson served the congregation from 1880 to 1887.

In January 1882, a cemetery site was given to the congregation in the town of Esther in Polk County by Ole Hendrickson. In 1887, Ole Hendrickson gave land near the cemetery for a church site. That year the first church was built. This congregation was of the Hauge Synod. In 1907, a $300 bell was installed in the steeple. This was a joy to all! In August 1930, the church was destroyed by lightning. Only the furniture and the dishes in the basement were saved. In the fall of that same year the present church was built.


The following are the officers: Bennett Mathiesen, President, Harvey Hanson, Vice President, Oliver Olson, Secretary, Menford Hendrickson, Treasurer, Rueben Kleven, envelope treasurer, Bloyd Hendrickson, Carl Nelson, Auditors; Clifford Aure, Bernard Egge, Menford Hendrickson, Budget Committee and Irving Nelson, cemetery fund.

The deacons are: Clifford Nelson, Bernard Egge and Almore Lind.

The trustees are: Richson Nelson, Marvin Hedlund and Carl Nelson. The sextons are: Donald Solem and Clarence Olson. The bell ringers are: Bernard Egge, Clarence Olson and Donald Solem.

As small children we didn’t realize the struggles and hardships of a dryland farm for the next ten years. Our first barn burned down and the new one was destroyed by a tornado, together with animals. There were no means of transportation except by horses, no schools to speak of, the nearest six miles away and only in summer. Dad taught us in winter. Wood was scarce and we often picked dry “Cow Pies” for fuel. Coal was hauled from Harlem. Through the generosity of my mother’s older sister and husband, Oscar and Maud Anderson of Crookston, we lived with them while attending Franklin school here with their son, Walter Eugene. About 1923, my folks gave up their farm and moved to Harlem again, taking up the restaurant business and there my brother and I finished high school. My father died August 5, 1943, at 66 and my mother November 4, 1965 in Crookston at 79. Both are buried in Harlem, Minnesota.

Having many Crookston contacts, I returned here and for many years was on the Crookston Daily Times staff. I was married to A. Leonard Anderson at Detroit Lakes, August 11, 1940, and lived here since. Leonard, born February 12, 1898, at Glyndon, Minnesota, died December 12, 1970. He retired in 1964 as a conductor after 46 years with the Great Northern Railway.

Esther Township

GUNNAR ERICKSON

Gunnar Carl Erickson and Selma (Sally) Ellen Amelia Johnson were married December 9, 1914, at her home in Esther township. On December 9, 1974, they celebrated their 60th anniversary at Bethany Lutheran Church, rural East Grand Forks, Minnesota.

Gunnar’s father, Matts H. Erickson, at 17 years of age came from Dalarna, Sweden, with about 75¢ in his pocket. He worked as a hired hand and was so energetic he could work behind two binders and consequently thought he could ask for double wages.

In 1890 he married Eugenia (Jennie) Louise Johnson who had come from Vastameland, Sweden, also in her teens. They settled in Northland Township where Matts had bought railroad land. At that time Northland, located ten miles north of East Grand Forks, had a post office, typical country store, creamery, blacksmith shop, feed mill, and dance hall. Many good times and wedding dances were held at Northland Hall.

Matts and Jennie were early members of the Bethesda Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church. They had three children: Esther, who married Julius Larson, Gunnar, and Adolph, who married Lilie Moberg. While the children were in their teens, Matts built a beautiful new house for which Gunnar remembers hauling lumber all summer long. It was one of the first houses in the country to have gas lights and a completely modern bathroom of that day. A tough job was pumping the hand pump in the basement to keep up the pressure for the bathroom facilities upstairs.

Many beautiful Christmas Eves in this lovely home are remembered by their children and grandchildren. Regardless of weather, they rode out to “Grandma and Grandpa’s” in a sleigh covered with horse blankets and robes with charcoal foot warmers to help keep them warm.

Selma’s parents, Swan Johnson and Martina Dag, both came from Smaland, Sweden, in their teens. Swan first worked on the railroad at Brainerd, Minnesota, and then came up to farm in East Grand Forks where Martina came to work for him. They were married and had five children: Ellen, Selma, Elmer, William, and Walter. Swan helped cut down trees to saw into lumber to build the original Bethesda Lutheran Church. He was always asked to toll the church bells for funerals as everyone said he could do it so well. As a young girl, Selma was an organist for the church.

Gunnar and Selma settled in Grand Forks township where they lived until 1935 when they moved to the Matts Erickson