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, Montana.

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

**Kongsvinger Church**

**Congregation**

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. He 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 Sevem, 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 Mathsen, 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.

**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) Louisa Johnson who had come from Vastmanland, Sweden, also in her teens. They settled in Northland Township where Matts had bought a 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 footwarmers to help keep them warm.

Selma’s parents, Swan Johnson and Martina Dog, 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
farm. As they lived closest to the Pleasant View School, they roomed and boarded the teachers for seventeen years. Most of their social events were church activities. Everyone went to Luther Leagues and even the men attended the Ladies Aids.

Threshold bees were always a time of excitement. However, they were not too great for the women as they involved lots and lots of cooking and baking. Pies were a must for dinner and sandwiches and cakes for both morning and afternoon lunches.

Gunnar bought his first Model-T touring car with side curtains from Johnson and Morgan in 1920 for $740. They had two children: Raymond Walter and Evelyn Margaret, both graduates of East Grand Forks Central. Ray served overseas during World War II. He married Gertrude Becker of Fargo. They built a home on the Matts Erickson farm. They have two boys: Brian, who manages Eastport Clothing in East Grand Forks, and Mark, who is an industrial arts teacher in Rock Springs, Wyoming.

Evelyn taught in a country school and later at Kennedy, Minnesota. She married James Kelleher of East Grand Forks. They have four children: Mary Kay, a kindergarten teacher in Anoka; Richard, a radio announcer in St. Paul; Kathleen (Mrs. Mark Erickson), a speech therapist in East Grand Forks; and Paul, a student at Moorhead State University.

On December 9, 1975, Selma and Gunnar Erickson will be celebrating their 61st anniversary with their children, grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

LUDVIG LARSON

Johannes Larson was born February 16, 1834 in Katralen, near Askim, Norway. His parents were Lars and Gunhild Gunderson Katralen. Mrs. Johannes Larson was born on June 17, 1839 also near Askim, Norway. Her parents were Mr. and Mrs. Gunder Gjellestad. They were married in the Askim Church in 1862. They lived on their farm, called “Borregar” until it was sold. On May 4, 1872, with their children, Ludvig, Anton, and Gina they emigrated to America in search of opportunities to make a better living. Having relatives in Renville County they went there, and with their help, rented a farm near Sacred Heart, Minnesota, where they lived for five years. Two more boys were born, Juel, and Carl Larson. Carl was only an infant of three weeks when four families, Mr. and Mrs. Kristian Quern, Mr. and Mrs. Bernt Larson, Gullick Kollin, and Mr. and Mrs. Johannes Larson decided to come up to the Red River Valley to homestead free land.

They traveled in covered wagons drawn by oxen. Gullick Kollin was the only one who owned a team of horses. They brought their chickens, potatoes, lots of flour and groceries, and seed grain with them. The young boys rode horseback on ponies and herded the cattle along the way. After several weeks of slow traveling and many inconveniences, they fortunately hit the place of Hans Hanson who had homesteaded here and had built a home in what is now West Polk County. Hanson was doubtful, and not at all pleased with a colony of people moving in on his property, but as soon as he became aware of the fact they talked the same language as he. Nonetheless, they were greeted with the most generous hospitality. Hanson’s wife was ill in a hospital at Crookston, Minnesota so he was alone with his young five-year-old daughter, Caroline.

All the women and children stayed in the house. They made beds for the children out of hollow trees, the length of the bed according to the length of the child. The men all bunked in the covered wagons.

Johannes Larson was a carpenter and had been in the logging business in Norway. With the help of the others, they built their log houses. Luckily it happened to be an open winter in 1877-78, so they could finish their homes in the short time that was left. The summer months were full of long hours of rough and hard work, clearing and breaking land.

It wasn’t always pleasant living here in those pioneer days. There were Indians living here, and they were not always friendly neighbors. Yet learning to know them, handing out loaves of bread and other food helped. A sure treat to them was tobacco. This managed to keep peace when they called.
She is buried on the family plot at Grand Marais near East Grand Forks. When the wild plums were in season, there would be many bushels in the buggy to be sold to Arneson Mercantile Store of East Grand Forks.

John Larson, the oldest child in this family, married Emma Johnson of Oslo, Minnesota in 1910. They live on their farm which was his father's homestead. They recently celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary arranged by their five children: Myrtle, Arlette, Gladys, Elmer and Kenneth. They have also twenty-one grandchildren, thirty great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren.

1. Alma Larson married Louis A. Busche who was in the creamery, poultry, and wool business before retiring. We own and lived on the farm, the land my grandfather homesteaded in 1877, almost a hundred years ago. My husband Louis passed away August 20, 1971. I am now living alone on the farm.

OLE A. OLSON

Ole A. Olson was born in Sweden on March 14, 1870 and died July 9, 1948. He married Nora Mikkelsen on April 6, 1898. She was born May 4, 1869, in Kvarfjord, Norway. and died January 19, 1950. Both were immigrants at the age of twelve years, they came to Polk County, Minnesota.

Their youngest son, Oliver N. Olson was born May 6, 1908. He married Clara R. Kolberg on July 7, 1934. Clara was born January 17, 1907. Mr. Olson did grain farming and raised cattle until his retirement. In 1934 the farm was operated by his son who also farmed grain, sugar beets, and raised cattle until he retired in 1972.

The home farm is located in Section 2, Esther Township, Polk County, Minnesota. They had four sons: Norman, Glan, Harlan, and Oliver. All these boys are college graduates, married and have jobs and families of their own.

Ole A. Olson applied for homestead in Canada, April 20, 1894, but due to marriage plans did not go there. (see the illustration).

BESS STORDAHL

Bess Stordahl with two brothers, Hans and Johannes, and two sisters, Mariit and Sigri from Trondhjem, Norway to Goodhue County, Kenyon, Minnesota in 1875. He married Caroline Hanson of Kenyon, Minnesota in 1880 and the same year moved and homesteaded in Northland Township, Section 22, East Grand Forks, Minnesota. The one sister, Sigri, married Lars Moan and moved to Lessar Township, McIntosh, Minnesota and Mariit married Engebret Magnuson, owner of a hotel in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Later they moved and homesteaded in Esther Township, Section 13, East Grand Forks, Minnesota. Engebret died at an early age, but his wife continued living on her farm. They had no children, her nephew Hans Stordahl, son of Bess and Caroline Stordahl, inherited her farm and made his home with her. She passed away August 1, 1936.

Hans Stordahl married Agnes Evelyn Frisk, daughter of Aron and Lydia Frisk, of Lessar Township, McIntosh, Minnesota. Hans remained farming till he retired in 1948. He passed away December 10, 1951. His widow and her six children continued farming and living on their farm.

One daughter, Harriet, married Howard Anderson, son of Andy and Olga Anderson, of Bemidji, Minnesota. They have three children: Brian, Renae and Julie. They are farming in Fairfax Township, Crookston, Minnesota. One daughter, Sharon, and one son, Harvey, are deceased. Rodger lives on the farm home and farms together with his brother Rodney. Carolyn is employed and lives at home with her mother and brother Rodger. Rodney married Gayle Pulkabek, daughter of Ted and Lois Pulkabek. They have four children: Karen, Kenley, Kristi, and Hans, living on their farm home in Northland Township, East Grand Forks, Minnesota.

Bess and Caroline Stordahl had nine other children besides Hans, five daughters: Ingeborg, Mrs. Mike Johnson, Viking, Alberta, Canada — deceased; Ida, Mrs. Chris Thompson, Duluth, Minnesota; Bertha, Mrs. Carl Lenten, Duluth, Minnesota; Marie, Mrs. Carl Thureen, Duluth, Minnesota; Esther, Mrs. Louise Starr, Fertile, Minnesota. There were four sons: John, Wilton, Minnesota — deceased; Albert, East Grand Forks, Minnesota — deceased; Oliver, East Grand Forks, Minnesota — deceased; Henry, Fertile, Minnesota — deceased; and one adopted son, Alvin — deceased.

The younger generation can’t begin to realize or imagine the hardships of pioneering days: living in a one-room sod house, the fears they had, fearing the Indians would come and take over, fighting prairie fires which so often did take over, no means of transportation or roads, and walking a distance of twelve or more miles carrying provisions on their backs for their families.

Grandfather, Bess Stordahl, often told of the time, a very hot summer day, he carried a flour sack on his back twelve miles. He became so tired, he stopped at the John Thureen home and they befriended him with rest and food. A glass of cold milk never tasted so delicious before or after in his life! He must of remembered it the rest of his life as he spoke of it so often.

Grandmother Stordahl often spoke of living in the one room house giving birth to her children. The rest of the family had to be aroused during the night and go outside while she gave birth to the new baby.
Euclid Township History

History as compiled from town and county records and accounts of present day residents by Loren W. Parkin, town clerk — 1976.

The St. Paul and Pacific Railroad laid tracks from the north end of the line at Glyndon, Minnesota, crossing the Red River at the site of Crookston to a point three miles south of Warren, Minnesota, in 1872. This enabled them to retain huge land grants given them by the Federal government. This new line ran through an uninhabited area only previously served by Red River ox carts. It was known as the Red River Line. Trains were run intermittently during winter months, when there was no steamboat traffic on Red and Red Lake Rivers. This railroad went bankrupt in 1873 and J. P. Farley was appointed receiver and continued until the property was sold to Mr. James J. Hill and his associates in early 1878. During this period Mr. Farley, who had not acquired any locomotives or rail cars, was only able to provide occasional service on this line, when he could rent equipment from the Northern Pacific Company at St. Paul.

Mr. James J. Hill and partner, Norman Kittson, who owned the steamboat line on the Red and Red Lake Rivers, had difficulty providing services in 1873, due to dry weather and low water in the rivers. They entered into agreement with Mr. Farley to construct and operate a line from the new town of Crookston to Fisher’s Landing. Mr. Farley was to furnish the rails, which were to be taken up from the end of the line south of Warren, Minnesota. A total of 10.5 miles of rails were removed and placed on this new line. This was the original railroad line of James J. Hill, later known as the Empire Builder. The line then terminated at a point some four and a half miles north of Euclid. This lends credibility to the story of Peter Stuhr that in 1880 he had arrived with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Carsten Stuhr, by immigrant car on a railroad from Lake City, Minnesota. They unloaded at a rail siding, known then as Mr. Cielan’s Coulee, and transported their livestock and possessions southwest across-country to their new home on the south half of Section 4, Euclid township.

The reorganization of the railroad in 1878 brought construction to the line to St. Vincent, Minnesota and connected it with the new Canadian Pacific railroad to Winnipeg, Manitoba. The new rail line brought a tremendous flow of new settlers and immigrants to the area. During the ensuing period of 1879 through 1915, the freeholders of the territory petitioned the new Polk county commissioners to organize a township in the area of township 152, range 47 and asked that it be known as the township of Euclid.

Charles Lockhart and Springer Harbough, who had come from Columbus, Ohio, held large holdings near and around the new railroad station site. Euclid was the name of the street in Columbus, Ohio, the boyhood home of these two friends. The petition was granted on July 22, 1879, according to the proceedings on page 94, book A of the Polk county commissioners.

The records of that date further state that L. A. Charboneau, R. O. Neal and George Charboneau were appointed first judges of election and Ed Charboneau and W. A. Perkins were appointed first clerks. The place of the first election was in the home of a Mr. A. M. Stuart. No present day residents recall

One of the engines and train crew that operated through Euclid in early 1880s between St. Paul and Winnipeg.