1875 when he moved into southern Minnesota. He worked on farms, besides teaching school until 1882, when he came to Aldal, Minnesota and entered into partnership with Dr. Arne Nelson in general merchandising and drug business. Business flourished. In 1887, business moved to Fertile. The partnership continued until 1893, when it was dissolved by mutual consent. Opheim taking over the general merchandise and Nelson the drug stock.

In 1895, Mr. Opheim erected a fine building which bears his name. Mr. Opheim was one of the founders of the First State Bank and served as director and vice-president until his death, April 5, 1915. He took active interest in the Brick and File Company, serving as one of its directors. As a member of the Republican party, he was a very ardent worker of the party, he was a very hard worker for its success in campaigns. He served as president in the village of Fertile for ten terms. Since Mr. Opheim never married, he was able to give earnest attention to every public interest, and did it diligently.

THEODORE O. PROPP

Theodore O. Propp moved to Fertile, Minnesota in 1904. He was born in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, December 21, 1790 of German immigrants. He was raised on a farm in southern Minnesota. After two years of college, he taught elementary school.

After teaching a few years, he decided to go into business. His first enterprise in Fertile was a clothing store. This he sold to go into the hardware and farm machinery business. He traveled throughout the farming area, trading farm machinery for cattle, and selling these on the St. Paul Market. He was active in civic affairs of the city, serving on the city council, the school board, and as president of the Polk County Fair Association. His wife Elise was a partner in the business.

They raised four daughters: Mildred, Mrs. Elmer Gamme, who passed away February 13, 1932; Vivian, Mrs. Earl Harvey, East Grand Forks, Minnesota; Doris, Mrs. K. D. Sayther, Mound, Minnesota; and Theodora, Mrs. K. V. Ingerson, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Shortly after the death of his wife Elise on March 30, 1927, he moved to Minneapolis to be with his two daughters, Theodora and Doris.

In 1943 during World War II at the age of 72, he was called to work for the General Accounting Office in Washington, D. C., where he served for six years. He returned to Minneapolis and continued to live there until his death on January 11, 1954.

OLE SYVERSEN VIKEN

Ole Syversen Viken and his wife Ingeborg Olsdatter Rud Viken together with Mr. Viken's old mother Anna Knudsen Viken, and their three daughters Anna, Alice (Olaug), and Thora immigrated to the United States from Nesbyen, Hallingdal, Norway in 1880. They arrived first at Lakesboro, Minnesota, where Mr. Viken had a relative. Later Mrs. Viken's two brothers, Jurgen and Jens Rud, convinced them to take a homestead near them at Fertile in Polk county. They arrived at Eden (New Berlin) by train and took a claim near the Red Lake northeast of Fertile. Four sons were born in America: Syvert, Henry, Otto and Olaf. Anna Viken married Andrew Stovern and pioneered at McIntosh; Alice Viken married Luther Fowler and resided in Two Rivers, Wisconsin; Thora married a Fertile school teacher, Mr. Orvik. Syvert married and became a pioneer farmer near Portland, Oregon. Henry was Chief of Police in Grand Forks. Olaf married Anna Larson and resided at Blackduck. Otto Joel Viken married Rose Morvig of Fertile. Rose and Otto had seven children: Albert, Anges, Dora, Olga, Otis, Orpha and George.

City of Fisher History

The Village of Fisher, now referred to as the City of Fisher, has a 1970 listed population of 383. It is situated on the banks of the Red Lake River, in the rich Red River Valley of the North.

Fisher is one of the oldest settlements in Polk County, having received its first settlers in the early 1870s. These were Norwegians or of Norwegian ancestry, Irish and many Scotch from Canada, and Swedes and Germans from Wisconsin. Some were also of mixed Indian blood.

The village, first called "Shirt-tail Bend" because a shirt had once been tied to a stick to warn steamboats of a bend in the river, was re-named Fisher's Landing, which name it retained for years before having it shortened to the present Fisher.

The settlement, back in 1875, was located down on the river bank, several blocks west and north of the present site, and owed its location and growth to the then flourishing steamboat traffic on the Red and Red Lake Rivers. Boats plied regularly between Winnipeg and Fisher's Landing, then the head of navigation. This encouraged early railroad building to meet the boat traffic at this point.

Mr. Fisher, a civil engineer for the St. Paul and Pacific Railway Company, was sent here to survey for the laying of tracks, and it was his name which made the settlement known as "Fisher's Landing." Rails that had been laid north of Euchild were taken up and used for the line to Fisher's Landing, in 1875.

The town at that time was a rough, frontier settlement and usually the scene of much activity and excitement. Many tales of fights involving both Indians and whites have been handed down from the early settlers.

Captain Russell, a steamboat skipper, was given credit for a peacemaker role in at least one riot which threatened to develop into a massacre, brought on by the liquor traffic and gambling, so prevalent around 1876 and 1877.

The fertile land in this vicinity was another inducement for early settlers, as well as one of the deciding factors in getting the railroad laid here. It is reported that James J. Hill, railroad builder and financier, owned ten acres at the present site of the Fisher school. He is said to have engaged a settler here to plow it with a team of oxen, and to plant wheat. He reaped 50 bushels to the acre.

This convinced him that future grain marketing would warrant establishment of a railway terminal here. Land at that time sold for about $2 an acre and outside capital bought up tracts, some of which contained several thousand acres. Flour mills were soon built, and later a cheese factory.

When the railroad was extended to Grand Forks later, the importance of river traffic decreased and consequently the village site was moved up from the river bank to the present location. About 1895 Fisher had its largest population, about 550, which was more than that of either Grand Forks or Crookston at that time.

Fisher then had a thriving business section, including a weekly newspaper, the "Fisher Bulletin", first publisher of which was a cousin of Admiral George Dewey of Spanish-American War fame, and also a distant relative of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The printing office was at that time located on what was known as "Ketten's Corner", but later was moved up the street to what is now the Post Office parking lot, where it was published by a Mr. Shire and later by a Mr. Shaughnessy. The Bulletin ceased publication about 1900.

Fisher was given its village charter of incorporation by a special legislative act in 1881. Fisher had several early pioneer doctors, but best remembered is Dr. William Hollands, who was the community doctor for forty-one years. Dr. Hollands was born in Wisconsin in 1881 and came to North Dakota as a
Village of Fisher.

Fisher Landing.

Fisher Public School.

FISHER LUTHERAN CHURCH (ALC)
The first settlers came to Fisher in about 1870 but the first permanent settlement was made in 1875 on the banks of the Red Lake River, due to the flourishing steamboat traffic and the promise seemingly of rich soil, lumbering and the easy river traffic. At first life was difficult, the people had little time for anything but hard work, sleeping and eating. But always in the back of their minds was a thought of better things. One of the most important was their church life. These early pioneers were a devout and pious people and felt they must hear God's Word.

The earliest recorded activity occurred in 1880 on a Sunday afternoon when eleven pioneer Norwegian emigrants gathered at the log home of Grunde Aakhus, the land is still owned by members of the Aakhus family. Two years later, in 1882, a church was built in the village with a membership of approximately one hundred souls. The structure is the same one that is the church of today, but it faced the north and it had a small entrance door and no steeple. Pastor Hans Solstad, who earlier had organized a congregation in Bygdland, was their first pastor and organizer. These eleven men sent Pastor Solstad to Minneapolis to buy a carload of lumber. Knute Onstad of the village built the church. Travel was not easy and whole families came, some driving and others walked carrying their family hymnbooks.

In 1897 a special meeting was called on July 25th and it was voted to turn the church around to face the west; raise it two feet, add the high steeple, a chancel, a double entry and to re-plaster to make it warmer. The entire cost was $600.
As the years roll by, may we continue as a "Singing Church", finding comfort and strength in the old, majestic hymns of our forefathers.

**ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Over the Pembina Trail, which opened in 1838, immigrants began to arrive at what was then called Fisher’s Landing, but after 1881, was called Fisher. Ox carts forded the Red Lake River along what was known as the Old Trail in the years 1884 to 1856, about a mile west of present day Fisher.

In “History and Biography of Polk County, Minnesota,” page 64, published in 1916, it is related that several Irish families came about 1872 to reside in what is called the Irish Settlement, along the Red River of the North some miles west of Fisher’s Landing. Among them were the Catholic families of Peter Genaw, Barney Haggerty, Mike Quirk, Patrick Quigley, Tom and John Logan, John Garrety and Matthew Martin. A few years later the John Conneran family came, settling closer to the Fisher’s Landing. These Catholic families sadly missed the services of a priest; but they clung to their religion.

From 1876 to 1879 Fisher’s Landing was attended by priests periodically from White Earth and Red Lake, Minnesota and Grand Forks, North Dakota. Happily, in 1880 Father J. Fortier, O.M.I. called. In 1881, Father Pierre Champagne from Red Lake Falls offered monthly Mass in the school house.

In 1881 a church building was erected and on Christmas Day that year, Father James Shirra of Grand Forks offered the first Mass in it, the first St. Francis Church. He continued to celebrate Mass twice a month until March, 1883 when he became the first resident priest of Fisher.

After July, 1883, Fisher became a mission attended from Crookston by Father Paschal Brunelle. Father Edward J. Lawler lived in Fisher from 1885 to 1887, when he moved to Crookston and attended Fisher as a mission. From 1891 until 1914 Father Fisher was attended from Crookston, East Grand Forks and Stephen by Fathers John Walsh, P. Hendricks, Michael Senger, Philip Murphy, Francis Hufnagel, James Green and Claude Massonat. Father Massonat stayed at the home of Thomas Logan for several weeks at a time while he instructed the Catholic children in preparation for the reception of the sacraments.

Occasionally on weekdays a priest would celebrate Mass in one of the homes. A private spot in the house would serve as a convenient altar. After the Mass in which the Catholics in the community participated, there was a celebration — a banquet, games, dancing, and singing. The home Masses were always gala occasions.

From 1911 to 1915 Fisher was served from Ada, East Grand Forks and Crookston by Fathers Charles Deshaies, D. G. Dorval, William Klinkhammer, J. B. Fonmosse and John P. Funk; but there was no permanent pastor. Mass was offered at only irregular intervals and the church building was deteriorating.

At this time Mrs. Tom Logan said to her husband, “Tom, please write to Bishop McGollrick and beg for a permanent pastor.” Bishop James McGollrick was the Bishop of the Duluth Diocese and Fisher was located in that diocese at that time. The Bishop’s reply came promptly: “As soon as you have your church renovated and rectory built, I’ll send a resident pastor.” Tom showed the letter to his wife with the remark, “Half of our people might be in hell by that time!” However, Mr. Logan got busy with the project.

The long awaited rectory came closer to actuality in 1915 when the basement for it was constructed under the supervision of Father Fonmosse. Under the supervision of his successor, Father J. H. Perrin-Laurent, a rectory, a hall beneath the church, and a sacristy onto the church were built in 1916. All this was made possible by a gift of $4,000 from the estate of Miss Ann Cox.

From the spring of 1918 to the spring of 1930, St. Francis Parish was served by a resident pastor. During that time Fathers Edward Grimprez, Stanislaus Beaulieu, F. J. Deschenes, Victor Miller and Patrick Lyons were the pastors. In those days when few sick stayed in hospitals, priests administered to them in their homes, even remaining at times all through the night; as is related about Father Grimprez, thus
relieving exhausted family members for a much needed rest.
Pastors who followed Father Lyons in 1930 were: Fathers Francis Doherty for about 18 years; Edward McMenamin; Arthur Lemire, who was pastor two separate times; Joseph Mulvey; William Keefe; John P. Funk for about 10 years; John O'Toole, who also was pastor two separate times; Eugene Connelly; Francis Baskerville; and Joseph Mulvey who had been pastor for a few months in 1951 and again in 1971 to the present time. Father Baskerville, pastor from 1968 to 1971, made many improvements in the rectory. He had a room built on the northwest part of the Church to serve for parents with young children at services, a classroom, etc.

After the American Crystal Sugar Company’s factory was built in East Grand Forks, sugar beets began to be raised extensively in the Red River Valley. Fisher then became one of the first communities to which Spanish-speaking people came to work in the beet fields during the summers. Because most of these people were Catholics, Spanish-speaking priests arrived to minister to them. Thus the pastors of St. Francis had the assistance of these priests during the summers.

Several young ladies of the parish have entered religious life. They are: Sister Scholastica Logan, O.S.B., Timothy Knox, O.S.B.; Ste. Marie Murphy, C.S.J.; Lorraine Kraft, O.S.B.; and Patricia Murphy, C.S.J.

At the end of 1975, St. Francis Parish had about 55 families. The present church building is the same one built in 1881; and it is, of all Catholic church buildings in the diocese, the oldest one still in use as a church. It antedates the Diocese of Crookston by 29 years!

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

The first pastors to work in this territory were Pastor Krueger from Fergus Falls in 1879, and the following year, Pastor Hink from North Dakota. The first regular pastor was Pastor C. Engel, who was installed in Ada, Minnesota, in 1880 and from there served Fisher, Wylie, Red Lake Falls, Warren, and Hillsboro. Candidate Paul Wichmann was installed in Ada in 1885 and under his guidance, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized December 3, 1886. A church three miles east of Fisher was erected and dedicated in 1887 and was served by Pastor G. F. Haare until his departure in 1897 when Trinity congregation called its first resident pastor, Candidate Paul Schedler.

The parsonage at the old site was built in 1898. In 1926 a new kitchen and study were added. The following pastors have served: Reverend H. C. Hinz, June 1908 to 1917; Reverend Paul Siegel from 1917 to 1919, and Reverend B. Schwanfelder, 1919 to April, 1933. Reverend Theodore Melinat served from June 4, 1933, to October, 1940. All sermons were in English except one service each month in German; in 1934 the English Order of Service was adopted.

June 10, 1934 marked the last picnic of the congregation band. It was an all-day picnic held in Wagner’s grove. The weather was warm enough for a rushing business at the refreshment stand, and record sales were reported by the Ladies Aid for dinner and lunches. Races of all kinds and three baseball games took place. Reverend John Ott served from November, 1940 to 1948; followed by Reverend Willard Hilpert, October 1948 to August, 1952; Reverend W. E. Hannemann, February, 1953 to April, 1956; Reverend Edmund Bentrup, July, 1956 to June, 1966. Reverend Daniel Hougum was installed on October 9, 1966 and is serving at present.

The Ladies Aid Society was organized in 1921 and still meets regularly. The ladies are members of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League. The Walther League was organized in 1933. In 1969 the name of the organization was changed to Active Christian Teens. On December 1, 1941, a Men’s Club was formed and became a member of the International Lutheran Laymen’s League in 1942. A Bible Class was organized in 1936 and the Sunday school in 1940. A new church was built in the village of Fisher and dedicated at services on November 9, 1941. A new parsonage was dedicated at special services in 1948. The dedication of a new Educational building was on March 23, 1958. Special Anniversaries of the Congregation have always been observed.
consin. From there he worked his way northwest arriving at Fisher’s Landing, Minnesota, about 1876. There he spent his first winter sawing cordwood for the arrival of the railroad the next year. He homesteaded 160 acres in Section 22, Fanny Township. He was married in April, 1883, to Miss Elsie Webster. They had eight children, Howard Calno, Charles Winfield, R. T. (all of name), Mervin Claude Harrison, Loraine, Celia, Eunice Olive and Evelyn Maryon. In June of 1888 he purchased the Southeast Quarter of Section 10, Fisher Township, which is still owned by members of his family. He also owned other land. He retired in 1912 and moved into Fisher, where he lived until 1920 when he and his wife moved to East Grand Forks, where he resided until his death on January 20, 1945. Mrs. Adams died, March 17, 1954. They are both buried in Greenwood Cemetery at Fisher, Minnesota.

R. T. ADAMS

Robert Thomas (R. T.) Adams was born in Fisher, Minnesota, January 23, 1888. His father was Andrew J. and his mother Elsie Webster Adams. He married March 29, 1920 at Crookston, Minnesota, Esther Ellen White, daughter of Richard E. and Margaret Morrow White. She died May 8, 1950. He later married M. Elizabeth, daughter of Charles and Emilie Schwarzkopf. She was born March 15, 1900 at Le Preux, Minnesota. She was a legal secretary and L.P.N. before her marriage. There were no children born of either marriage. R. T. Adams’ maternal grandfather, Calno U. Webster, Sr., came to Fisher’s Landing in 1876, and homesteaded one mile and a half east of Fisher, and his father, Andrew J. Adams, homesteaded in Section twenty-two in Fanny Township but bought 160 acres in Section 10 and moved to Fisher Township in 1888.

R. T. Adams received his education in the public schools of Fisher. The summer after he was fourteen he worked for a farmer north of Fisher the entire season for $100 and returned to school that fall. After school was out the next year he left with the principal of the school selling magazines for schools in North Dakota and Montana. After discovering that he could sell and make from $7 to $8 a day, he kept drifting west, selling house to house and landed in Denver, where he met some of the stuff personnel of the Sells-Floto and Buffalo Bills circus. He shipped out with them as a ticket seller and assistant steward, in which capacities he stayed for a few years. In the winter time he worked at various occupations, sometimes in the woods, sometimes on construction jobs on dams, railroads, all through the west. One winter he drove a freight team in the Mojave desert. On one trip back home as he was getting off the train the whole town was getting on and said they were going to Minot to register for a drawing for homesteads on the Berthold reservation; so he went with them and was one of two that drew one. That was in 1915. Then came World War I and he served in the United States Army in the 48th Field Artillery, which was the first motorized division.

In 1919, he went back to the homestead, which is now owned by his nephew, Max Adams. In 1920, back again in Fisher, he bought grain for two years. In 1923 he bought the Fisher Garage. In 1924, on 60 acres of rented land, he raised his first sugar beets and that was the year that the beet factory in East Grand Forks opened. In 1925 he signed a Chevrolet contract. In 1928 the bank closed. In 1930 he bought his first farm and started the Fisher Oil Company. In 1936 he bought a half interest in the Kelley Oil Company of Crookston and has been a director ever since and president several times. It is a very closely held corporation and is in both the land and oil business. He bought more land. He was a director of the Northwest Petroleum Association of Minneapolis for 16 years, was President of the Red River Valley Beet Growers Association (from 1954 to 1962), a member of the Village Council, Marble, active in the F.F.A. and A.R.C., Past Commander of the American Legion, 32nd degree Mason, Shriner, Elks, Eagles, I.O.O.F. and was an active director of the Grand Forks Mission for many years. He is a real estate broker. From September, 1941 until V-J day in 1945 he was a member of the Polk County Draft Board No. 1. He sold the Fisher Garage to Maurice Anderson in 1945.

HENRY BEISWENGER

I was born October 15, 1902 in Polk County, Nesbit Township, Minnesota. I married Henry Beiswenger on October 27, 1920. I was born February 4, 1894. We had three children, Eunice, Eldin and Lloyd. Henry died October, 1936.

Eunice was born November 8, 1921. She married Pearl Hartel on January 3, 1942. They live on a farm northeast of McIntosh, Minnesota. They have four children: Gary, Ronald, Linda and Lee Ann. Gary was born October 24, 1942. He married Dorothy Young, July 22, 1967. They have one daughter, Landa Marie, born March 3, 1975. Ronald was born January 18, 1946. He married Marilyn Kuehl on June 8, 1946. They have one boy. Michael James, born September 24, 1971. Linda was born May 28, 1950. She married Bruce Nelson February 27, 1971. They have one daughter, Jennifer Lynn, who was born August 20, 1973. Lee Ann was born October 18, 1954. She married Kevin Nascone on June 16, 1974.

Eldin was born April 12, 1923. He married Jean Norman November 3, 1944. Eldin died September 6, 1965. Jean now lives in Oregon. They had four children: Shirley, Ann, Joyce and Craig. Shirley was born June 8, 1946. She married Bill Banion on September 10, 1969. They now live in California. They have one daughter, Michelle, born December 5, 1970. Ann was born October 20, 1952. She married James Banion, March 25, 1972. They also live in California. Joyce was born September 23, 1954. She married Rodney Cornett on September 15, 1973. They, too, live in California. Craig was born January 30, 1957. He is serving in the United States Army and is stationed in Georgia.

Lloyd was born February 6, 1927. He married Ruth Kasprick on November 18, 1948. They have four children: Scott, Rodney, Gloria, and Beverly. Scott was born on October 20, 1953. Rodney was born July 23, 1956. Gloria was born January 15, 1958. She is a senior in the Fisher High School at Fisher, Minnesota. Beverly was born January 15, 1963, and is in the seventh grade at Fisher, Minnesota.

ERNEST C. GUNSTINSON

Gilbert O. Gunstinson (1882-1949) came to the United States from Norway in 1889 when seven years old, coming to the Gunde Sorensen farm, one mile south of Fisher. He enlisted in the army during the Spanish-American War and served as a guard at San Francisco after the great earthquake
The Ole Gunstinson Family 1929. One of the first gasoline delivery trucks.

of 1906. He later returned to Fisher and married Mary Knutson in 1910. He operated a dray line in Fisher for some years and then worked for Standard Oil on a gasoline truck. In 1930 he became a partner with Adams and Ross in forming the Fisher Oil Co., driving the delivery truck until retirement in 1947. He was known by friends as "Gasoline Ole"—driving a gas truck then was a far cry from using today's modern machines. He had to pull out the gas in five gallon cans involving a lot of lifting and carrying.

Ole and Mary were parents of six children: Mrs. Dave (Lillian) Droppo of Cedar, Minnesota; Gilman, married to Mary Horack, now living in Vegas, Minnesota; Ernest, married to Helen Jensen, living in Fisher, Minnesota; Mrs. Joe (Mabel) Thompson of Crookston, Minnesota; Ervin, married to Marion Rutherford of Fisher, Minnesota; Mrs. Roy (Laverne) Nephew of Mentor, Minnesota. There are sixteen grandchildren.

Ole died in 1949 and Mary is presently living at the Riverview Rest Home in Crookston, Minnesota. Mary was a fine seamstress in her day.

Mary Knutson Gunstinson, born in 1884, was the oldest child of Ole O. Knutson (1848-1930) and Lena Breland Knutson (1869-1947) who were both from Norway. Ole O. came from Valdres, Norway with his father and brother Knut to Hartland, Wisconsin in 1869. He came to Fisher somewhere between 1875-80, settling one mile south of Fisher. They had seven children, Oscar and Olaus still live on the farm home renting out the land. They have been known as the Knutson Brothers along with Albert who died in 1970.

Ernest Gunstinson and Helen Jensen were married in Moorhead in 1935, where Helen was attending Concordia College. They have six children: Mrs. William (Patricia) Roy, of Santa Maria, California. They both are teachers. They have three children: Cathy, Carol and Scotty. Mrs. John (Sandra) Kraft of Richland Center, Wisconsin. John is affiliated with New York Life Insurance. They have five children: Mike, Craig, Bob, Tom and Mary. They lost five-month old Mike in 1958, and fourteen-year old Bob in 1974; Gerald and Pat Wallin Gunstinson of Santa Barbara, California, where Jerry is an accountant for Allied Magnetics; Mrs. Ronald (Jennifer) Haggerty, who has three children: John, Debra, and Maura; Mrs. Paul (Stephanie) Egeland, they have two sons; Eric and David; Vernon is 14 years old and lives at home in Fisher, Minnesota.

Ernest started driving a bulk oil tank for Fisher Oil Company in 1932 and in 1953 joined Transport Inc. of Grand Forks, driving an oil transport. He retired in 1974 after 21 years and over two million miles of driving for them.

Helen worked for a number of years in the Larson Grocery Store and later in the Jack and Jill Store. The Jensens and Gunstinsons all belonged to the Fisher Lutheran Church. The Gunstinson home is located directly above the old Fisher's Landing townsite. The woods below are full of giant old trees; oak, cottonwood, aspen 24-feet around the base and must have graced the woods years before the steamboats came up the river to Fisher's Landing.

Time and history roll on. We thank our ancestors for an album of rich memories and an incomparable heritage.

**ERVIN GUNSTINSON**

Ervin Jerome and Marian Jean Gunstinson, Fisher, Minnesota, are both graduates of Fisher High School. Ervin grew up in Fisher and during high school worked part-time for "Tub" Olson in the grocery store. After graduating he worked at the Fisher Garage and on his twenty-first birthday, July 22, 1942, entered the United States Army. He went to Little Rock, Arkansas for basic training, then overseas where he spent thirty-five months in the European Theatre, returning home in September, 1945. He worked for the Polk County Highway Department for a summer and then worked as an apprentice mechanic at a local machine shop under "On-the-job" training program sponsored by the Veteran's Administration. He operated his own tractor repair shop for many years in the building at his own home, which formerly was the garage for the oil trucks of the Fisher Oil Company. His father, Gilbert O. Gunstinson, who died in 1949, was part owner of that company and delivered gasoline and fuel oil to customers in this area. They gave him the name of "Gasoline Ole". His mother, Mary, was seamstress and made many dresses for the ladies of the community as well as clothes for her own family. She is 91 years old and is a resident at the Riverview Nursing Home in Crookston. Ervin has three sisters: Mrs. David Droppo (Lillian) of Cedar, Minnesota; Mrs. Joe Thompson (Mabel) of Crookston; and Mrs. Roy Nephew (LaVerne) of Mentor; also two brothers: Gilman of Vegas, Minnesota, and Ernest of Fisher, Minnesota.

Marian lived on a farm near Euclid, Minnesota. She was a 4-H member and took part in activities of the former Keystone Presbyterian Church at Key West, Minnesota. When she graduated in 1942, an unusual record was claimed by Fisher High School as she was one of four members of a single family graduating that year. Three older brothers, Ronald, Donald and Edmund graduated with her; Edmund as valedictorian and Marian as salutatorian. Mr. R. L. Edwards was superintendent at that time. Ronald and Donald started their education at District 88 in rural Fann Township and Edmund 8 years later. Edmund and two years later by Marian. Names of some of the teachers were Mae Landon of Euclid, Pearl Wentzel from Fisher, Nora Forseth of Mentor, DeLina LeDuc, Ethel Brunsberg, Zella Yuengel and Lillian Bitzer. The year Marian finished eighth grade only five students were attending that school. They were Marian, Howard Rutherford, her cousin; Erma O'Brecht, Lorraine O'Brecht and Robert Fitzsimmons.

The four students, children of William and Mae Rutherford, who are still living on the farm near Euclid, entered high school in Fisher when bus transportation was made available in 1938 through the efforts of Superintendent George Eddie. A few years later, when it included elementary students, their younger brother, Herbert, joined them.

Marian went on to graduate from the Teacher's training department of East Grand Forks and taught for two and a half years at a rural school. She married Ervin Gunstinson in August, 1946, and are members of the Fisher Lutheran Church. They have four children and six grandchildren: James Ervin, a Vietnam Veteran of the United States Navy; married Mary Atwell of Pacific Beach, Washington, and their daughter, Kelly Jo, live in El Cajon, California. Those who live in Fisher are: Laurel Jean, her husband, Lynn M. Haake, and their three sons: Kyle Lynn, Noel Timothy, and Jeremy Jay; Thomas, also a Vietnam veteran of the United States Army, and Paula Mae, her husband, Duane M. Haake, and two children, Carey Duane and Leah Mae. The Haakes farm north of Fisher. Thomas is attending AVII in East Grand Forks and Duane works at American Crystal Sugar Company in Crookston, Minnesota.

Ervin is presently employed by American Crystal Sugar Company.
Company in Crookston and Marian is a clerk at Beiswenger’s Jack and Jill Store in Fisher.

Both enjoy their association with the American Legion and Auxiliary, Sons of Norway, and the Valley Viking Folk Dance Club, where they have learned folk dances of many countries and have performed for many social functions in the community.

GUSTAVE GUNSTENSON

Gustave Gunstenson, senior member of the firm of Gunstenson Brothers, was born October 16, 1888, the son of the late Ole Gunstenson, a pioneer druggist who came to Fisher’s Landing, as it was then called, in 1879. Up until 1880, Fisher’s Landing was the leading business point in Polk County, which had been set aside and established in 1858. Polk County was named after an ex-president, James Knox Polk. One of the first drug stores was owned by a Dr. Lancaster, who hired Ole Gunstenson as manager. Later he bought the store and it remained in the Gunstenson family until 1949, a period of seventy years.

Gustave Gunstenson lived his entire life in the village, graduated from the Fisher School, took a course at the University of Minnesota and later attended the University of North Dakota taking advanced chemistry. He helped his father in the store on vacations and summers since the age of twelve and later, upon his father’s death in 1916, Gustave and his younger brother, Alfred, took over and were known as Gunstenson Brothers-Fisher Drug Store.

Gustave Gunstenson served as Mayor of the village. He was a lifelong and faithful worker in the Fisher Lutheran Church having been both baptized and confirmed there. He served for years on several boards of the church. He was a charter member of the Theodore Stalmo American Legion Post having served in World War I.

On May 14, 1929, he married Lottie S. Krostone in the Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. They have made their home in Fisher ever since. Upon his retirement with the sale of the drug store, they spent their time traveling and built a winter home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Later, he disposed of that and they spent winters in Arizona. They traveled extensively in Europe, having spent five summers there.

Gustave Gunstenson died May 8, 1973, after months of failing health. His wife, Lottie, continues to live in the home built by her father, Gunder Krostone, in 1898.

L. C. HENDERSON

I. Leslie Charles Henderson, was not a pioneer in Polk County, but I am among the oldest of my generation still living. My father was born “Charles Henderson” in Newboro, Ontario, Canada, in 1856. My mother, Louisa Siebrasse, was born in Red Wing, Minnesota, in 1869. My father married Annie Klein in 1884; she was killed in a cyclcone in 1885. Years later, he married my mother in 1890. They lived in Argyle where I was born in 1893, later moving to Fisher. They leased the Northern Tier Hotel in 1894, and changed the name to Fisher Hotel. My mother ran the hotel after my father’s death in 1922 until 1931 when she retired. I had four sisters and two brothers: Stella, Avis, Ann, Ellsworth, Grace and Donald.

Gunstenson worked for the Post Office in Bagley for four years. Then I went to Grand Forks, North Dakota. I got a job with Standard Oil Company, running the first station in Grand Forks. I married Henrietta Peterson in 1917, and lived in Grafton. My wife died in the flu epidemic of 1919. I served in the Army at Camp Lewis Washington. Shortly after my going into the Army, the war was over. In 1919, I went on the road for Standard Oil. My territory was Edgeley, North Dakota, just south of Jamestown. In 1921, I came back to Fisher and went into the building game, met Marguerite Clifford of St. Paul, a teacher, and was married in 1925.

Our first son, Keith, was born in the Webster house and Barbara Ann and Charles were born in the Hamilton house. Since I retired in 1959, I have spent the winters in California where Barbara Ann and Keith live. Barbara Ann is Mrs. Robert Calhoun and has four children. They live in Long Beach. Keith and wife, Corky, live in Garden Grove and have six children. My wife died in 1962. My son Charles and wife, Olga, have three children and live in Roseville.

I did much traveling in the summer for three or four years seeking out relatives of my father and mother in Canada and found many; so I have a real fine family tree on my mother’s side. I have always loved to fish and hunt all my life and have made several trips to the Arctic Circle. Great fun!

When I sold my home in Fisher a couple of years ago, I donated all my treasured tools and some pictures to the Historical Society in Crookston. In 1966, I married my present wife, Gertrude Hafey from Edgeley, North Dakota, whom I had met in 1921 when I lived in Edgeley. Since we married, we have lived at 276 Monte Vista, Costa Mesa, California.

HANS JENSEN

Hans Jensen (1852-1894) and Caroline Goth (1849-1930) were both born in Denmark. Hans came to the Albert Lea area as a young man and moved on to Omaha where he married Caroline Amelia Goth. They came to Fisher some time before 1880 and established a blacksmith shop. The first blacksmith shop was located in Fisher’s Landing, a point of land just north of the present M. E. Larson home.

A shop record book of Hans’ for the year 1882 lists good customers such as Ole Knutson, Ole Vattendahl, Jens Wallerback, Andrew Kleven, Griebbeck, Malmberg, Bangen, Gulseth—all good Norske names with an occasional Torkel Lee, Leighness, Furlong, Brewster, Thompson and DeMers and a J. W. Silverthorn. You could get a horse shed for twenty-cents, sharpen a plow-lay for thirty five cents and one dollar and fifty cents for a new whippletree. Buggy and bobsled repairs were also done here.

The Jensens had one daughter, Emily, and a son, Andrew. They lost their father when small children, so became industrious at an early age. Andrew recalled picking mustard for local farmers at twenty-five cents a day. He stoked the pot bellied stove at the old schoolhouse and remembered the teacher keeping a tin of melted soap on the stove-top for little tongues uttering bad words.

Andrew graduated from business college in Grand Forks and became depot agent in Mapes, North Dakota and also in Petersburg. He married Sigrid Stortoen in 1913 and moved to Sabin and then later to Baker, Minnesota, where he served as depot agent. Their two daughters, Beryl and Helen were born there. They moved back to Fisher in 1918 and their son Quen-ten was born in 1919. The Jensens had a carefree, happy childhood in Fisher, spending much of their time fishing, hunting and vacation trips in Northhome with the Stortoens.

Mr. Jensen had many papers found in the walls of the old depot showing that the first agent in Fisher’s Landing was George W. Bolton, who was also the first agent pensioned off by Great Northern Railroad. Mr. Jensen hears the speech by
CARL GREY — then President of the Great Northern. He congratulated Mr. Bolton and said he would receive a pension of $20.00 a month for the rest of his life. The railroad was first known as the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad. Mr. Jensen got a letter dated 1885 from James J. Hill asking Mr. Winkler to contact area farmers for one to five thousand bushels of white oats and to send bids plus a sample of oats to him in St. Paul.

Andrew Jensen was active in church affairs and also served as Mayor of Fisher.

Mr. Jensen was a great fisherman. He claims to have caught twenty-three different species of fish from the years 1902 to 1962 and caught eleven different kinds in the Red Lake River in the fall of 1962. In earlier days he spent a lot of time hunting prairie chickens and ducks with his old pals Gustave and Alfred Gunstenson and Albert Strande. Beryl Jensen married Jack Pettit and moved to the Los Angeles area where she was a school principal until retirement in 1974. Quentin Jensen taught school at Shattuck Military School at Fairibault where he married Betty Beach Asleson, who taught blind children. They moved to Glendora, California in 1957. Quentin is a Math teacher in the Azusa school system.

When Sigrid Jensen died in 1957, Andrew retired from the Great Northern after fifty years of service. He died in California in 1969.

Sigrid Strotroen Jensen was born to Andrew O. (1868-1955) and Bereth Jevning Stortroen (1871-1892) in Neby (near Climax) in 1888. Her parents were both born in Tynset, Norway, coming to Neby area when young. There was also a sister, Ragna. Bereth died when only twenty-one years old in childbirth. Andrew remarried to Ingeborg Jevening and the girls were brought up with their seven children, Bereth, Ole, Osman, Alvin, Amy, Mildred and Thelma.

Sigrid told many stories of their life in Neby and on a farm known as the Buffalo farm. During a prairie fire, Ragna’s clothes caught fire and Sigrid saved her sister’s life by rolling her in the dirt. Sigrid graduated from Crookston College. In 1909 she won a new white car for selling the most subscriptions to the Crookston Times. The car was called the White Cloud. She clerked in grocery stores in Climax and at Newburg, North Dakota and she spent some time homesteading at Wabanica, Minnesota, near Baudette. She received a grant of 163 acres of land in January of 1913, signed by Woodrow Wilson. She called her Homestead “Sunnybrook Farm”.

Wedding picture of Rasmus Johnson and Mathilda Knutson 1892.

My parents, Mr. and Mrs. Rasmus Johnson, both came from Norway, father from Bergen and mother from Telemarken and Oslo. When my father stepped off the train here in the late 1870’s, they promptly handed him a bucket and told him to carry water to help extinguish an elevator fire in progress.

My mother came here with her widowed mother, three brothers and one sister. Their trunk bore only the address “Anna, Knut’s Datter-U.S.A.”

Rasmus Johnson, in his teens, worked on farms for a short time, and later acquired land in the Fisher area.

On June 20, 1892, he married Mathilda Knutson, and they lived in Fisher all their lives. Father eventually owned two business establishments in Fisher, and also several farms in the Fisher and Climax areas. The farms were rented out as the family always lived in the village.

Three children were born to my parents, so I had one brother, Enert Johnson, who died in 1963; and one sister, Dorothy Johnson, who died in 1956. My mother died in 1918, and father passed away in 1930.

I still live in the house the folks built when I was about two years old, so, if “it takes a heap of living to make a house a home,” I guess mine is a home.

I attended school in the “old brick schoolhouse across the tracks,” and held many cherished memories of those days and schoolmates.

My college education was principally at St. Cloud Normal School, now called St. Cloud University, from which I graduated three times. Some of the summer session courses were, however, taken at the University of North Dakota, Bemidji State and the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

After one year of college, I taught the fall term of the Useldinger School near Euclid, where some of the pupils were older than I was. I then resumed my college studies at St. Cloud in December.

After graduation from the three-year elementary course, I taught at Henning, Northwood, Swanville, Hallock, Bemidji, Crookston and then Fisher. Four years later I returned to Crookston, where I taught at Lincoln and served eight years as principal of Franklin.

After getting my Bachelor of Science degree I went back to

MADELAINE JOHNSON

Since I, Madeleine Johnson, am the only living member of my immediate family, and also have few other relatives, my story will be rather dull besides the many colorful and adventurous events of most family histories.

Sigrid Stortroen at Homestead at Wabonika 1912.
Fisher, where I spent 25 years teaching a variety of subjects in the high school, and served a few years as high school principal. My extra-curricular duties included coaching plays, speech events, and being advisor for the school newspaper.

I retired in 1958, but continued to do substitute teaching for a few years. It was the great variety of teaching assignments that made my career interesting and enjoyable, but, I must say it is also great to be retired.

So what do I do now to keep busy? Plenty.

I work on the lawn and in my garden; harvest and can or freeze the fruits and vegetables; take the school census; am correspondent for the Crookston Daily Times and the Grand Forks Herald; have served on the Polk County Nursing Board since 1956, nine years as chairman, which I resigned last year, but am still on the board; work with the ALCW of Fisher Lutheran Church, and served one year as treasurer of the congregation.

All hasn't been work, of course. I have enjoyed trips that have taken me to every state, several Canadian provinces, and jaunts into Mexico, but I am really not one who craves a lot of traveling.

I enjoy driving my car, watching television, and there are plenty of social activities here to take up the slack.

So life in FISHER and the RED RIVER VALLEY is pretty GREAT!

In the spring of 1903, Mike's mother and children left Formosa to join Mike's father in the Langdon, North Dakota, area where Mike's father had gone to establish a home for his family. Mike remained on the farm and later helped his father with farming until his younger brother was able to take over. It was in 1936, that Mike first came to Polk County, Minnesota, where he worked as a farm hired hand. Those were the days when a dollar per day or $20 a month was good wages.

During World War II, Mike left Minnesota to work at the Black Hills Ordinance Depot as a mechanic. He was later transferred to Sacramento Air Depot. After the war, he came back to Minnesota and established his own repair shop at Fisher.

On September 20, 1948, Mike married the former Etta Peterson, daughter of the late Swan and Amanda Peterson. Etta was born at Lynn Center, Illinois, September 30, 1908. She attended grade and high school at Galesburg, Illinois, while living with a sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs., Myrtle, Carl Victor Erickson. After the death of her sister, Myrtle, in 1930; Etta stayed in the home of her brother-in-law helping care for her sister's and four children. Later, Etta came to Fisher to be with her folks.

Etta graduated from East Grand Forks Training Department, received her bachelor of science degree from Bemidji State College and her special education qualifications were met by attending Moorhead State College, Monmouth College, Illinois; and University of North Dakota. She taught in rural one-room schools, grades one through eight and the Fisher Public School. It was at one of the adult plays in Triple Two that Mike first saw Etta. She finished the 1948-49 school term at Fisher Public School and then decided to assist her husband in his business, as well as help care for her aged father. Mike and Etta went to live in the home of Etta's brother, Delman, and her father, where Delman, Etta and Mike presently still reside in Fisher. Etta and Mike purchased the former Leonard Berg, Sr. Implement location in Fisher where Mike established and managed Mike's Garage and Standard Oil Filling Station for seventeen years. The garage and station were totally destroyed by fire September 18, 1973.

On April 22, 1952, Etta's father died. Her mother preceded her father in death, July 21, 1940.

Etta's son, Michael John, was born at Deaconess Hospital, Grand Forks, North Dakota, December 5, 1952. Some of you may remember "Mickey" as your "Grand Forks Herald Paper Boy". He worked on the farm for his Uncle, Vincent Peterson, during some summers. He also played lead guitar in a band, "The Cocoon". He graduated from Fisher High School and attended the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. He went with a group from the University to Europe in the summer of 1972. He is presently working on the Oil Pipe Line in Alaska.

Etta went back to teaching in Fisher Public School in 1960 and taught through the 1973-74 term. She was "Teacher of the Year" of Fisher School in 1968-69. On September 23, 1973, Mike and Etta celebrated their silver wedding anniversary. Now they have retired. This will give Mike more time to enjoy his hobby of gardening.

MICHAEL KOEHMSTEDT

Michael (Mike) Koehmstedt was born July 31, 1902, at Formosa, Ontario, Canada. His father, John Joseph Koehmstedt, was born in Demestin, Ontario, Canada, May 16, 1869, and died in Langdon, North Dakota, May 20, 1946. His mother was born in Formosa, Ontario, Canada, August 25, 1871, and died in Langdon, North Dakota, November 30, 1956.

Mike's sisters and brother are Mrs. George, (Agatha Kathrena) Reidhammer, born October 29, 1893 and died July 7, 1967; Anthony Albert, born March 3, 1895; Joseph John, born May 20, 1897, and died September 13, 1920; Mrs. William, (Oihilda Mary) Karst, born May 1, 1900 and died March 22, 1973; Michael, born July 31, 1902; Mrs. Olivia, (Pauline Annie) Derosier born June 27, 1905; Mrs. Roman (Theresa) Metzger, born May 1, 1907; Mrs. John (Kathryn Mary) Hoffarth, born March 29, 1910; Lawrence Charley, born October 1, 1912, and Mrs. Don. (Rhoda Cecelia) Bowen, born March 2, 1917.
GUNDER KROSTUE

As a large land owner, an enterprising and successful merchant, a member of the State Legislature, the Mayor, President of the bank, the postmaster for many years of the town of Benson and a prominent, influential and highly esteemed citizen, the late Hon. Gunder Krostue dignified, adorned and admirably represented the best manhood and citizenship of Polk County.

Gunder Krostue, one of the pioneers of Fisher's Landing was born June 7, 1851, on a farm named "Krostue" in Setesdal, Norway, emigrating with his parents at the age of ten. The family, which consisted of his parents, five brothers and sisters, of whom he was the youngest, settled on a farm in Wauapaca, Wisconsin. Here he grew to manhood and obtained a limited education. He worked on the farm and later found employment as a lumberjack driving logs down the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri. He found these occupations too precarious and they held no future. Therefore, he decided to strike out on his own. He arrived in Fisher's Landing in 1879. For a time he served as engineer with a threshing crew and then worked on the survey of the Great Northern Railroad between Grand Forks, and Crookston. He became a close friend of the late James J. Hill. In 1881 he moved to a homestead in Grand Forks county, which he later sold.

This same year he decided to locate in the village and was employed as a clerk in a general store owned by the late Marcus Johnson and Hugh Thompson. He later bought it and became an independent merchant selling general merchandise and farming implements, huge barrels of salt, and so forth. This proved to be the most successful of his many activities and carried him to a prominent place in connection with many business interests in Polk County. He was the first president of the Fisher bank from the time of its organization until his death. He was twice mayor of the village, served as postmaster for many years, held several offices in the Fisher Lutheran Church and was a faithful worker. He later became an extensive land owner and at one time owned 2,100 acres in the Red River Valley.

In public life this far-seeing gentleman was a trusted leader and in the fall of 1902 his fellow citizens selected him as their representative to the State Legislative House. He served on several committees being chairman of grain and warehouse, roads, bridges, house committee on drainage. He also succeeded in getting a bill through for the destruction of glandered horses. This was a decided victory for Mr. Krostue and of great importance to the farmers of the state. He was reelected in the fall of 1904 and in 1905 was chairman of committees on, binding twine, public health, dairy and food products.

Mr. Krostue was married December 12, 1883, to Christene Benson, a daughter of Lars Benson of Wauapaca. Here she was born and confirmed. The family later moved to Goodhue County, where they resided on a farm until the accidental death of the father by drowning at Red Wing. After that sad event the mother and the seven children moved to rural Glen-

wood in Pope County, where Christene resided until her marriage to Gunder Krostue. There were seven children born to this union. The lone survivor in 1976 is Lottie (Mrs. Gustave Gunstenson) of Fisher. The Krostue's first born son, Lawrence, a farmer, died at an early age leaving four children, all successful farmers in the Bygland area.

In 1898 he built a large, beautiful home for his family in which one daughter, Lottie, now widowed, has resided for the past 46 years. Mr. Krostue remained active in the village until his death, July 7, 1912, in his 61st year. In his memory, his widow donated a two manual Moller pipe organ to their Fisher Lutheran Church. She continued to live in the old home until her death November 28, 1926.

Mr. Krostue belonged to the class of men who rise to success and influence through their native ability and industry and win the regard of all who know them. He had sterling qualities and an admirable manhood. He left the memory of many commendable accomplishments as a citizen and many wise and useful achievements.

ARNOLD LARSON


Agnes was born October 18, 1916, at Pine Creek, Minnesota, and grew up and attended school in Pine Creek, Minnesota. Agnes' father, Ole Skogstad was born March 30, 1886, at Portland, North Dakota, and passed away January 1, 1958. Ole Skogstad, born in 1891; at age of five years, moved to Pine Creek, Minnesota, with his family. On December 3, 1915, he married Mabel Davidson. Mabel Davidson was born September 1, 1895, at Pine Creek, Minnesota, and died November 7, 1964, at Roseau, Minnesota.

Nine children were born to Ole and Mabel. Ole was a farmer and worked as a road maintenance man. He was a familiar figure around the neighborhood. There was always time to visit and he would be asked to come in for a chat and coffee, and then continue on the road. The evenings we spent around the fire listening to him sing the old Norwegian songs, which we gradually learned to sing. Occasionally he would play the mouth organ, which was a treat for everyone. But, the
evenings were not complete without the storytories of Norsk folklore by Mabel. She was asked to retell the stories time and time again.

Agnes is proud of her Norwegian heritage and is active in church and Norwegian organizations. She has been president of the Landings Lag the last seven years. Her son, Mark Gary, bought the home place in Pine Creek. She also owns the Jewelry department of Anderson’s Camera and Gift Shop in Crookston, Minnesota.

Agnes and Arnold have two children: Arline and Gary.

Arline was born November 6, 1936, at Fisher, Minnesota, and grew up in Fisher, graduated from Fisher High School and attended the University of North Dakota. She married Wayne Anderson on September 8, 1957, and they have one son, Mark, born June 7, 1958. Wayne and Arline live in Crookston, Minnesota, and are owners of Anderson’s Camera and Gift Shop.

Gary was born January 22, 1946, at Crookston. He grew up in Fisher, graduated from the Fisher High School and then attended Thief River Falls Vocational School and served three years in the United States Navy. He married Margaret Johnson on Stillwater, Minnesota. They have one girl, Kelli Jo, born March 26, 1971. Gary works for Paper Calmenson in St. Paul, Minnesota, and they live in Stillwater, Minnesota.

JOHN PETERSON

John Peterson, grandfather of Melvin S. Peterson of Fisher, Minnesota, was born in Denmark to Mr. and Mrs. Peter John-son. As a young man, John Peterson, left his native Denmark and set out for America and finally found his place in the Minnesota Brewery, which in the 1840-1860 period was mostly concerned with fighting Indians. John Peterson, according to the stories he told his children later on, experienced many encounters that were unbelievable. It was proof of what the early settlers really had to endure in order to settle and build up our land. John Peterson certainly did his share to make Minnesota a law abiding place to live for people of all races.

John Peterson married Mrs. Anna Olson, whose husband had passed away. Besides her son Bjergluf, they had the following children: Hans, Halvor, Christian, Marie (Mrs. Thor Legvold) and Andrew. This family moved from Belgrade, Minnesota to Fisher’s Landing in 1875. The John Petions were the first settlers west of the river at Fisher’s Landing and on their farm was the original point of crossing the Red Lake River, even before the crossing at Hoot, Minnesota became known. John Peterson built his farm home where Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Peterson now reside. A room in the house in which they lived was used by the neighbors west of Fisher as the first school. John Peterson and Tjestov Sorenson were two of the original settlers of the Fisher neighborhood.

Tjestov Sorenson, grandfather of Melvin Peterson on his mother’s side, with his family moved from Belgrade, Minnesota to Fisher’s Landing in 1876. They also settled west of Fisher and owned land now owned by Leo Wallenhoffer and the land owned by Soren, Sam, Daniel, and Georgina Soren-son. Tjestov Sorenson had a daughter, Tillie Sorenson, who married Halvor Peterson, son of John Peterson on November 4, 1892 in the Fisher Lutheran Church. This church is still in use. To them were born: John, East Grand Forks, Minnesota; Theodore I, deceased in infancy; Theodore II, Jamestown, North Dakota; Anna, Fisher, Minnesota; Thorina (Mrs. J. O. Christiansen), East Grand Forks, Minnesota; Marie (Mrs. Oscar Thompson), East Grand Forks, Minnesota; and Melvin. All are retired except Melvin who lives on the original John Peterson farm and farms the land with hired help. Melvin has also been selling International Harvester machinery, tractors, and trucks in Crookston since 1951.

Melvin Peterson married Della Norden on August 2, 1940. He was employed by International Harvester Co. as a sales- man and later blockman in North Dakota. They have two daughters: Elaine Marie and Barbara Jean, both graduates from Concordia College of Moorhead, Minnesota with majors in home economics. Elaine married Gareth Nelson of Kimrye, North Dakota on July 27, 1963. They have three sons: Steven, Brent and Ryan and they reside in Minneapolis. Barbara mar- ried Darrell Berg of White Bear Lake, Minnesota on July 10, 1971. They have one son Jeffrey, and they reside in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The descendants of John Peterson held a reunion on July 4, 1975 at the Melvin Peterson farm home, where John Peterson settled in 1875. They celebrated the 100th Anniversary of his coming to Fisher’s Landing. Sixty-three attended out of a possible one hundred. They came from California, Colorado, and many cities in Minnesota and North Dakota. It was an event that was really enjoyed by all present. We would certainly encourage other families to hold reunions of this type!

Melvin and Della Peterson, Barbara and Darrell Berg and Jeffery, Elaine and Gary Nelson and Steven, Brent and Ryan Nelson.

JOHN QUIRK

I came to Fisher, Minnesota from Lanark County in Eastern Ontario, in the year of 1901. At that time, Fisher was known as Fisher’s Landing. It was a neat little village with the best farm lands in the Red River Valley or the “Great Northwest”.

In 1901, there was no resident priest in Fisher and three or four months would pass before we would have Mass. This occurred when a priest would pass through from Winnipeg. In 1915, a resident home was built and Mass was held on a more frequent basis. Priests from Crookston and East Grand Forks would help out. There is quite a contrast now, with a priest available every Sunday and weekday.

It was fun living in Fisher in those days. In the winter we would clean off a patch of ice and go skating. There would be logging boats and men working to prevent logs from piling up around the bend in the river, too. We would have picnics in Furlong’s Park during the summer. Some Fisher residents would pitch tents in this park for the entire summer.

I entered Fisher School in 1902 and went through seventh and eighth grades. I then took the teacher’s exam and taught for three years. Teaching would start in the summer and last for six or seven months; rarely did it last nine months. This was because the winters were too severe to get to the school, especially if one had to walk. There were no road machines in those days. It was the same getting to Church; we used sleighs, not cars. There was a livery barn where the men folk left their horses and had them fed.

In 1907 I was married to John Quirk at the old Sacred Heart Church in East Grand Forks by Fr. James Green. We lived on the prairie in a little shanty until 1910 when we moved into our new home in Bygdan Township. During the years from 1909 to 1931 we had seven children; Mary, Buddie, Matthew, Earl, Genevieve, William, and Eugene.

In 1931 the family moved to Nisbet Township and began farming until 1954. We had a good doctor in those days. Dr. Holland would travel the country caring for the sick. He would travel by horse and buggy or sleigh; anyway, he could make it in the rain or snow.

In the winter, John would take all the work horses to the lumber camps. In the spring he would lead them across the river from Fisher, let them loose, and they would find their
way home, (about nine miles). How John's dad, Mike Quirk, would welcome them home again for the spring work!

There were two banks in Fisher in those early days. Also in Fisher were three grocery stores; some sold ready-to-wear clothing, dresses for ladies, and overalls and jackets for men. Other businesses were a creamery, a livery barn, a millinery shop. Grove's meat market and a barber shop operated by Albert Strande. Hotel Fisher was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Henderson. The drug store and lumber yard were owned and operated by Ole Gunstenson, and later by his sons, Alfred and Gustave. The funeral home and hardware store were owned by William Hamilton and he served the surrounding area including Climax and Eldred. Also located in Fisher were two grain elevators and, not to be forgotten, a passenger train which arrived in the late afternoon. All the young folk would go to see who was arriving in Fisher.

When my husband, John, passed away in 1954, our sons took over the farm and I lived with them. In April, 1970, I moved to Sunshine Terrace, East Grand Forks. I find Sunshine Terrace to be a lovely place to age gracefully, Ha! You are your own boss and everyone is so friendly and kind. It is a wonderful place for peace and comfort.

**OLE STALEMO**

Among some of the earliest settlers in the Fisher area were Ole Stalemo and his wife Siri Skomdal from Satesdalen, Norway. They homesteaded two miles southwest of Fisher in the 1870's. Their children were: Gunhild, Sena, Annie, John, Paul, Andrew and Theodore. Paul is the only survivor. Ole had a threshing machine and did a lot of custom threshing and also farmed. Ole died in 1898 from typhoid fever. One thing Paul still remembers of his father is that he died in July and his funeral was held on the lawn at the home.

With the help of hired men, the family still continued farming and when the boys were big enough they took over farming. Gunhild married Gunsten Knutson and settled on a farm near Thief River Falls. Sena married Ben Johnson and farmed one mile west of Fisher. Annie, John and Andrew never married but continued on the farm with their mother, and also after her death in 1938. Andrew lived on the farm until 1966 when sickness forced him to leave. He then entered the Woodland Apartments in Crookston where he lived until his death in 1973. Theodore entered World War I in 1918 and was assigned to Co. F 306th Infantry. He was killed on October 28, 1918. He was the first casualty of World War I from the Fisher area. The American Legion Post 242 of Fisher is named for him. Paul married Ida Erickson who came to this area in 1915 from Moline, Illinois, with her father, two brothers and a sister. They settled on what is now the Gunder Sorenson farm just west of Fisher which was sold when her father died. Paul and Ida built a home three miles west of Fisher in 1927, and farmed there until 1957. They then retired and bought a home in Fisher where they still live. They are members of the Fisher Lutheran Church where they celebrated their 50th Anniversary in 1972. Their son, Clifford, who married Patricia Carlson of Hitterdal and their two sons Paul and Edwin now live on the farm.

**AMOS AND MARTHA WAGNER**

Amos and Martha Wagner were both born and raised in Polk County. They were married in June of 1919 and had three children. Martha Wagner (Ross) is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ross, and Amos is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Julius Wagner. Their children are Lucille (Mrs. Edward Reitmeier) and Alvin and Willis. Lucille and Edward were married in 1940.
and they have one son, Ronald, who married Julie Phalen in June 1969, and they have three children: Jasen, Denise, and Lance. Alvin married Maxine Jobe in June, 1946, and they have four boys: Leslie, Wayne, Gary and Daryl. Leslie married Linda Carlson in June, 1973, and they have one son, Bryce. Wayne married Kathy Erickson in December, 1970, and they have two children: Kimberly and Troy. Gary is single and lives in Crookston. Daryl lives at home and is a freshman in high school.

Willis married Marilyn Tangen in October, 1949, and they have four children: Thomas who married Roberta Fafulik in May, 1970, and they have two daughters; Christine and Karen; Paulette who married Gary Erick in January, 1972, and they have two daughters; Colette and Heidi; Cynthia married Stephen Uness in February, 1975, and Marsha lives at home and is a senior in high school.

Amos and Martha raised two foster children, their grand-nephews, Gerald and Duane Wagner. Gerald married Margaret Morris and they have three children. Duane is single. Amos and Martha celebrated their golden anniversary in 1969. Amos passed away in 1971 and Martha lives in their house in the village of Fonda.

She has fifteen grandchildren and ten great grandchildren, so when the family gets together on holidays, there are now twenty-nine.

**LAWRENCE AND LILLY WAGNER**

Lawrence and Lilly Wagner, lifelong Fisher area residents are descendants of early day Polk County settlers. Lawrence Daniel Wagner was born December 3, 1899, north of Fisher in Nesbit township to William John Wagner (1870-1930) who came to that area in 1886 and Bertha Alvina Michaels Wagner (1880-1964) who was born in Polk County. Ancestors of both sets of parents were from Germany and had settled in Wisconsin in the mid-1850’s. Lawrence’s father, William John Wagner, who lived north of Fisher in the Keywest area, was known as “Prairie Bill” to distinguish him from another William Wagner, known as “Timber Bill” who lived in the woods by the river. Lawrence’s mother, Bertha Michaels who lived in that area also, told of planting ten acres of trees to establish their homestead. This was known as a tree claim.

Lawrence’s wife, Lilly Anna Gesche Rady, was born in Lowell township of Polk County on July 26, 1901, to Louis and Minnie Fochler. She was known as the “Gesche Girl.” They were married on July 26, 1922, at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Williston, North Dakota.

Lawrence and Lilly lived on the northeast corner of Swt. 33, T. 118, R. 62, northeast of Fisher. They started farming in 1924, and they farmed until 1960. In 1969, they moved to the town of Fisher.

Frederic Radi (born in Wisconsin) and Maria Magdalena Stehr Radi from Germany. Lawrence and Lilly Wagner were married in 1923 at the Fisher Country Church of Trinity Lutheran. They lived in Fisher Township until they moved into the village of Fisher in 1927. They have always farmed and are pioneers in the growing sugar beets, having started in 1925. Lawrence has been on the Board of Directors of the Beet Growers Association for Polk County and also for the area in the 1940’s and 50’s.

He was also on the board that helped the Truck Hauling Association for Sugar Beet Growers get started in the 1950’s. He has held offices in a number of community and area organizations. He was a member of the Fisher School Board for fifteen years as treasurer, eighteen years as a director of the Federal Land Bank, several years as secretary treasurer of the Fisher Locker Association, trustee of the Lutheran Church of Fisher, a time as treasurer of the Valley Migrant Mission, several years as chairman of the Fisher Area Farm Bureau, four years as Mayor of Fisher and for a number of years has been a director and treasurer of Vineland Mutual Insurance Company of Climax. The couple was honored in 1965 with the Valley Farm and Homemakers Award from West Polk County at the Red River Valley Winter shows. In 1974, they were the Pioneer Couple of Crookston’s Pioneer Day and are life members of the Polk County Historical Society. In 1975, they were honored in Fargo for their significant contribution as pioneers in the Sugar Beet Industry of the Red River Valley. Lilly has been active in many organizations as well as being a busy farm wife and mother. She held offices and participated in the Ladies Aid, school organizations, and the American Legion Auxiliary.

The Wagners have been great sports fans in Fisher also. They have five children; three sons all of Fisher and two daughters. The eldest, Norman, was married to the former Arleen Norby in 1947. They are parents of four children: Dee (Mrs. Ronald Kraft); Lawrence Daniel II; Robert, and Joan and two grandchildren; Brian Andrew and Erin Marie.

The second oldest son, Mervin, married Dorothy Hanson in 1949. Arlene married Charlotte Knutson in 1960, and they are parents of three children: Sheri, Brent and Susan.

Helen married Harry Puffe, Jr. in 1951 and they are parents of Scott, Pamela and Jim. They live in Moorhead. Rose married Herman Skyberg, Jr. in 1966, and lives in East Grand Forks. Lawrence and Lilly celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary in 1973.

**NORMAN WAGNER**

Norman Ray Wagner was born in 1924 to Lawrence and Lilly Wagner of Fisher, whose parents were early residents of Polk County. Arleen Norby Wagner was born in 1928 to John and Lena Norby of Plummer, Minnesota. Arleen’s mother, grandmother and great-grandfather were early Polk County residents also. Grandfather Ole Gjermundson came from Norway about 1868 to southern Minnesota. With his father, Gjer- mund Nerison, and three brothers and one sister (who took the
name of Vraa from their home in Norway), who had come to America a couple of years later. They all homesteaded near Climax in the 1870's.

Lena Gjermundson was born in a little house on the banks of the Sand Hill River in 1886. Her mother died when she was but five years old, and she later moved to McIntosh, Minnesota, with her sister where she met and married John Norby. Arleen was born to John and Lena Norby in 1928. She graduated from Plummer high school in 1945, after which she attended Bemidji State College where she met and married Norman Wagner in 1947. Since that time they have lived in Fisher.

Norman attended the Fisher Public School graduating in 1942. He is a graduate of Bemidji State College and has done his graduate studies at the University of North Dakota. He was in the Navy and is a member of the Fisher American Legion, a Post Commander of the Legion and a Post Commander of the old Tri-County Council of Polk, Mahnomen and Red Lake Counties. Norman has been very active in athletics. In high school, he played basketball, at Bemidji College, he was on the varsity basketball and football teams, and for many years, played local independent basketball, baseball and softball. In addition to running a full time farming operation, he has been a social studies teacher in the Fisher High School since 1953; also athletic director, while at the same time coaching basketball, track and football. He was school principal for nine years and was selected Teacher of the Year in 1966-67.

He has served as President of District 31 High School Coaches Association, been delegate to the Minnesota State Delegate assembly and on the state level has been on the Board of the Minnesota Coaches Association and is currently president. He is also an elected member of the Minnesota State High School League, which sets the policies for all state high school extra-curricular activities concerning music, speech and athletics. In 1958, during the State Centennial, Norman was honored by being chosen a Minnesota Sports Champion.

Norman was charter member of the Riverview Hospital Board, serving several years. Both Norman and Arleen have been active in local and state politics for a number of years, participating in precinct, county and State levels of the Republican Party. Norman also ran, though unsuccessfully, for the House of Representatives. In the community, he has been a member of the Village Council and Past President of the Chamber of Commerce. The family are members of the Lutheran Church of Fisher where he has been on the Church Board and she has been active in the Ladies Aid Society and Sunday School. Arleen is also an active member of the Polk County Historical Society and American Legion Auxiliary. They are the parents of four children: Dee, married to Ronald Kraft with one grandson, Brian Andrew Kraft, and granddaughter, Erin Marie, and sons; Lawrence and Robert, and daughter, Joan. All have been students of or graduated from the University of North Dakota, except Robert, who graduated from the University of Minnesota, Duluth, Minnesota.

CHRISTIAN WIDENHOEFER

Christian Widenhoefer was a native of Wurttemberg, Germany, born on December 26, 1860, to Jacob and Catherine (Burr) Widenhoefer. He attended the excellent common schools of that country until he was thirteen years old. In 1873, he immigrated to the United States with his parents and located in Beaver Bay, Minnesota, where they remained for five years. The parents moved in 1878 to Polk County, where they took a homestead in 1879 near Fisher and were among the successful farmers. They were parents of the following children: Barbara, Carl, William, Mary, Christian, Wilhelmina and Jacob.

Christian, the subject of this story, moved to Michigan where he entered an apprenticeship to the jeweler's trade. After learning his trade, he moved to Fisher, Minnesota, and worked on his father's farm for one year. In 1881, he moved into the village of Fisher, where he located and established a jewelry store. He carried a fine line of goods; watches, clocks, jewelry and so forth, and did a good business, both in repairing and sales. Christian Widenhoefer received an appointment as Fisher Postmaster from President McKinley on June 14, 1897, and he held the position until his death, December 14, 1925. Members of the Widenhoefer family headed the Fisher Post Office for 52 years.

Mr. Christian Widenhoefer was united in marriage April 16, 1885, at Fisher to Miss Wilhelmina Radi, the daughter of Frederick and Anna Radi, natives of northern Germany. Mrs. Widenhoefer's birthday was February 18, 1868, and date of death, October 6, 1940. Christian was an esteemed business man in the village, a staunch Republican, and prominently identified with all movements calculated to benefit either town or country. They were the parents of eight children: Edward, Henry, Selma, Herman, Meta, Walter, Frieda and Erma.

Meta is the lone survivor in the family. She was named acting postmaster at the death of her father and served until February 2, 1926, when her brother, Henry, received a temporary appointment from President Coolidge; a regular commission and appointment by President Hoover in 1930; and again by President Roosevelt in 1940 which placed him on a permanent basis. Meta worked at the Fisher bank and at American Crystal Sugar Company in East Grand Forks until her retirement. She now resides in Fisher. Also living are twelve grandchildren, thirty-five great-grandchildren and seven great-greatgrandchildren. Noel, Warner and Walton Wentzel of the Fisher area are among the twelve grandchildren.

Nielsville, Minnesota History

Nielsville — Records kept by the earliest settlers show that the Nielsville community was started near the battlefields where the Sioux and Chippewa Indians fought for supremacy in Northern Minnesota.

The settlement dates back to May of 1872 when Nels O. Paulsrud, for whom the village was named, settled in what is now Hubbard township about a mile and one-half northwest of the present Nielsville, and near the Little River battlefield. Paulsrud came to America from Norway in 1869, and together with his family, built a small cabin on his claim. An old deed reveals that the pioneer's name was really Nels (or Nils) Olson, and that the name Paulsrud was adopted later from the estate where they lived in Norway.

Other families settled in the area and a sketch written in 1888 reveals that only about 25 families settled in the entire county in 1872, with most of them along the Red and Sand Hill rivers.

A post office was established, and records show that the settlement was named Nielsville in the year of 1882. The inland village which sprang up around the post office was known as "Old Nielsville." The post office was first located on the Andrew Thompson farm one mile west of Nielsville.

Lewis S. Kolden arrived on the scene in 1883, and the post office was later transferred to the Kolden store near the Paulsrud claim. S. W. Brekke opened a blacksmith shop in 1883, and John Peterson opened a shop during the following year. Paulsrud carried the mail from Caledonia, North Dakota to the Thompson farm and later from Fisher to Old Nielsville.

Noted as a thrifty little town during those years, Nielsville was located in the southwestern corner of Polk county and on the Crookston-Moorhead branch of the Great Northern Railroad. It is situated in one of the best farming sections of the Red River Valley.

As the town grew, businesses sprang up and stores changed hands quite often. Kolden sold his store to his brother, Syver Kolden, and E. C. Onstad in 1892. They in turn sold to George Tollofson, and he and Onstad, who had built another store, moved their establishments to Nielsville when the railroad reached this point in 1896. Halvor Benson and Charles Bye also built stores on the new site.

That same fall Andrew Tronnes built the "Nielsville House" and St. Anthony and Dakota Elevator Company erected an elevator and commissioned an agent to run it. St. Petri Lutheran church, which was built near the old town, was moved to Nielsville in 1897.

The settlement grew as more establishments came into being. Halvor Benson and Charles Bye operated grocery and dry goods stores, and Kolden established a lumber yard in the new town in 1897. When Kolden entered the lumber business in Nielsville he bought out the yard of the Rosan Brothers. The lumber company changed hands a number of times and eventually was operated by John Dahl and members of the Dahl family for a number of years.

In 1897, the Rev. O. H. Brodland became the first resident pastor to serve the St. Petri Lutheran church, bringing God's message in both the Norwegian and English dialects.

The population continued to grow as more businesses opened up. Among them were livery stables operated through the years by Alfred Wegner, Benny Vigen, Louis Haugen, Ingvald Edsmoe, and John Orvik; implementers, machinery and gas station by Onstads and Peter Kunkel; harness shop, Eugene Howland; Northwestern Elevator Company with Andrew Monson as agent; butcher shops by Peder Wigen, Lars Vignes, Jacobsons, Albert Jahl, Melvin Edsmoe, Hans Paulson, Julius Brekke, Emil Paulson, Archie Olson, and John Martinson; hotel, restaurant, and shoemaking by E. P. Ramsey; Benson Brothers, furniture, framing and funeral supplies; feed mill by Martin Sand; John Swenson, painter; blacksmith shops, J. P. Skalor, S. Brekke, Palmer Sharpe, John Peterson,