versity. Our daughter and her husband are also teachers as are our son and his wife.

We, Mr. and Mrs. Art Amiot, celebrated our 35th Wedding Anniversary on August 26, 1975.

CHARLES LeBLANC

Charles LaBlanc came from Canada in 1877. He had four sons: Charles, Louis, Dominque and Joe. LeBlanc’s addition in Crookston was named after his family. Dominque married Clara Le May from Mankato, Minnesota, and homesteaded in Kertonville Township in 1879. They had six sons and three daughters: Fred, Art, Alfonse, Delphis, Ernest and Ovid and Anna, Blanché, and Laura. They lived on their homestead until they passed away. Later Fred LeBlanc lived there and eventually sold it to Dennie Plante. Dominque bought land in Gentilly Township from George Gamache. That land was farmed by Delphis and Art LeBlanc. Delphis later rented this land to the LaBlancs. They had four children: Vivian, Vernon, Gerald and Claudia. Delphis died in 1964. The farm was then sold to Gerald who married Marilyn Yon. They have five boys: Greg, Dan, Mike, John and Duane, and three girls: Suzanne, Janine and Lori all living at home.

Godfrey Township

Godfrey Township was given its title at its organization August 4, 1881 for Warren N. Godfrey, an early settler at the southwest end of Maple Lake in the township. He later moved to the state of Washington, according to Warren Upham, Minnesota historian. First township officers were: W. N. Godfrey, Tosten G. Lee, David Vatsinder, supervisors; Michael Horton, clerk; Alexander Adams, treasurer; P. W. Horton, justice of the peace.

Besides Godfrey, earliest settlers were two Hortons, Jacob Gerstner and Arthur Neron, who filed on claims in 1879. Maple Bay School district 90 was organized in 1883. School was held at the W. N. Godfrey home and taught by Lottie Dennison. The first school house was built in 1884 by Simon Solberg, with Sana Housam as first teacher.

At one time Godfrey had four school districts: No. 95 Woodland Nook, No. 96 Pleasant View; No. 90 Maple Bay; and No. 113 Roadside. All have consolidated.

Maple Lake was one of the most beautiful lakes in Northern Minnesota when the first settlers arrived. It was nine miles long and from half to one and-a-half wide. Its shores were surrounded by heavy timber and the big birches bent out over the lake. It was certainly a sight to behold. No wonder that an early townsite was laid out and platted at the west end of the lake in 1882, and a general store was established by Markham from Crookston. A Post Office was also established at the same time called the Maple Bay Post Office, which is run at the present time by Mr. Ness, who also has a general store at the same place.

Later another store was located near the county highway and operated over the years by Chester Ramberg, Leonard Rambert, Luther Johnson, Fred Johnson, and Adolph Brandwic. Maple Bay Store is now operated by Mrs. Brandwick and her son, Dr. Kenneth Brandwick, a chiropractor.

PETER BERTILS

Peter Christian Bertils was born November 5, 1848 in Hurdahl, Prostgjold, Norway to Mr. and Mrs. Bertil Norgaard. He emigrated from Norway to Fillmore County in Minnesota in the year of 1874. He married Gunhild Hellickson in the year of 1881. He and his wife and two children Bertil and Albert with three other families drove horses attached to covered wagons to northern Minnesota. They herded livestock ahead of the teams. Peter brought four cows, three head of young stock and six sheep. Naturally this sort of traveling was very slow and the travelers were a whole month on the way. They slept in their wagons at night and on the road. The men walked much of the time while the women and children rode in true pioneer fashion. When they reached the Wild Rice River they found it too high to ford, and they were obliged to detour three miles to cross on a bridge. This sort of detouring really caused delay.

The resourceful travelers milked their cows morning and night and traded the milk for butter and bread. The Bertils family went to Godfrey Township where he selected land eight miles north and one mile west of Fertile. They had a very hard time at first. Peter built a sod house which had only a dirt floor and two small windows. The glass was purchased at Crookston. They traded first at the Aldahl store and also at the one kept by John Ladue. They went to Red Lake Falls to have their wheat ground. The first year they did some breaking of the land and the next summer they had five acres of grain.

In 1936 Peter Bertils was recognized as Chief Raconteur of Early Day Tales by the St. Paul Newspaper. The Bertils family, like its neighbors, worked hard to improve the land and develop the farm. Peter and his wife, who died in 1912, witnessed the remarkable development of the section which they first knew as a frontier into a smiling, prosperous countryside.
Peter was a very spiritual man and was very active in the work of the church. He was a song leader and also led in prayer (Klokker). He taught Sunday school and would walk many miles to teach Sunday school in a neighboring township.

Other children of the pioneer couples were Maria, Marie, Effie, Clarence and Edward. Edward is the only living descendant. He married Martha Bakken October 11, 1922, and they have six children, twenty-six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Their six children are Mrs. Arthur E. Lee (Grace), Embarass, Minnesota; Mrs. Harold Underdahl (Ellen), Fergus Falls, Minnesota; Vernon Bertils, Crookston, Minnesota; Mrs. Harding Vidden (Irene), Fertile, Minnesota; Paul Bertils, Cedar, Minnesota and David Bertils, Bismarck, North Dakota.

Some of the names and dates were taken from a Norwegian Bible 116 years old that belonged to Mrs. Peter Bertils.

GULBRAND AND KARI BRAATEN

Gulbrand Broden (Braaten) and Kari Stormyra were married in Grant County, Wisconsin, in December, 1874. They had come from Norway with their families in the 1860’s.

They lived in Wisconsin in the vicinity of Castle Rock for eight years after their marriage. Here their four eldest children were born: Otius, Clara, Bennie and Julius.

The hills and woods of Wisconsin made farming difficult. Stories of the ‘rolling prairies’ of the Red River Valley in Minnesota lured them to the land where farming would be easier.

In 1882 they packed their belongings into a box car and came to Barnesville. Mrs. Broden and the children stayed with the Ole Haugen (Erickson) family that summer. (Mrs. Haugen was a relative of Mrs. Broden). Gulbrand Broden came to Polk County, where he filed a claim on 160 acres in what was later organized as Godfrey Township.

The following winter they spent with Mr. and Mrs. Ole Swensrud south of Maple Lake. Mrs. Swensrud was a sister of Kari Broden. Otius and Clara spoke often of the enjoyable times they had spent with this aunt and uncle by their little lake.

The next summer a sod shanty served as their dwelling until a two story log house was completed.

Their log home resembled that of most pioneer settlers. Money was scarce so Gulbrand went out working whenever he could leave his own work. That left Kari with the sole care of the children in that new land. Indians roamed the prairies and would stop by to ask for food. They always proved to be friendly.

For some years Gulbrand went to Grafton, North Dakota to thresh in the fall. When he sent money home, Kari would sew it inside her clothes for safe keeping. It was left to Otius, the eldest son, to plow with the walking plow. He was so small he had to stand on a box to get the harness on the horse.

After some years a schoolhouse was built in the neighborhood. This became the place where worship services were also held. Kari would tell of walking to services and carrying a child too small to walk.

Both Gulbrand and his wife were born in Norway, and the strength of their hardy ancestors stood them in good stead in the new pioneer land. For fire wood they traveled many miles; sometimes supplies were hauled from Crookston, twenty-five miles away. The only mode of transportation was horse and wagon or sled. As the town of Fertile grew, it became a trading center for the farmers.

Severe blizzards in the winter, hail storms in the summer, and even a killing frost in July that destroyed the wheat crop, were just a few of the hardships. In the 1890’s a diphtheria epidemic claimed the lives of two of their children who had been born after they came to Minnesota.

The Northern Pacific built a railroad north from Fertile. The farmers in the area helped build the grade using teams and “scrapers.” An elevator was built by the track about a mile from Gulbrand Broden’s farm buildings. A store and post office were later erected there, and this made it easier for the neighborhood farmers to sell their products and secure supplies.

For some years the family attended worship services held in the schoolhouse. Then the congregation known as “Vor Frelsers” (Our Saviour) established a church about three miles south of their home. In that cemetery lie buried two of their children. Velma and Sophie, who died in the diphtheria epidemic in the early 1890’s. Later the Broden family joined the Maple Bay Lutheran Free Church congregation.

Gulbrand served on town and church boards, but the greatest contributions of this pioneer couple were in the helping hand they extended to all who needed it. Even though small at first, their home was always open to anyone in need of shelter. The saying, “Der som det er hjerte rom saa er det hus rom” (Where there is room in the heart there is room in the house) describes this pioneer family’s spirit.

Two more children were born to them, Carl and Sophie; after moving to Minnesota.


VIDDEN

Helge Vidden was born at Hallingdal, Norway, February 22, 1825. He married Gunhild Locken there in 1852. In 1879 they and the younger children came to Lansing, Iowa. A year later they moved to Medicine Lake County, Minnesota. They had eight children. They were Helge, Ole who married Gor Sdredegaard, Anne who married Erik Norby, Gor who married Ole Kaste, Ingrid who married Andres Morvig, Margit who married Ole Sdredegaard, Oline who married Gust Strand, and Gunhild who married John Siddy.

Helge's son Ole was married in Norway in 1877 and two years later came to Yellow Medicine Lake County, Minnesota. The following year he moved to Fertile, Minnesota. Ole was very active in the church and community affairs. At one time he was bank director.

Ole and Gor had one son, Herman, born September 25, 1882. He married Christine Syversrud in 1912. Herman was secretary of the Little Norway Congregation for thirty-nine years and Sunday School superintendent for many years. Herman and Christine had six children. Olaf passed away in 1960; Evelyn (Mrs. James Jonathan) San Diego, California; Harding married to Irene Bertils and they live at Fertile, Minnesota; Milton married Beverly Schroeder and lives at East Grand Forks, Minnesota; Vernon married Bernice Fisher and they live at East Grand Forks, Minnesota; and Vivian (Mrs. Rueben Iversen) lives at Maple Bay, Mentor, Minnesota.

Ole Vidden built one of the first new houses in the area. Here his son Herman and family resided until his death in 1953. Harding moved there in 1953. They still live in the remodeled house built by Harding’s grandfather, Ole. The children and grandchildren of Ole recall stories told them about the Indians living in the thick woods just south of the farm buildings. These hills were referred to as the “Indian Hills”.

Ole and Helge Vidden.

Herman, Christine and Olaf.