Hammond Township

HERBERT AND HANNAH AVERY

Herbert Ernest Avery was born April 18, 1867 at Cooperstown, New York, youngest of three children of Delos Lucian Avery and Juliette Richardson (had a brother Alva and sister Ida). At eighteen he started working for the gentry in New York City. These people were noted English men and women, among whom were Stanford White, Devraez Emmett and George Hyde Clark. Several of these people went down with the Titanic when it was making its maiden voyage. They were related to the Stewarts of England, through marriage.

While employed as "Head Coachman" at these homes, Herbert met Hannah Elizabeth Lindberg who was employed by Mrs. Emmett, sister of Stanford White, designer of "Madison Square Gardens".

Hannah was born January 10, 1865 in Sweden and came across the ocean when twenty years old. She could not speak English but learned quickly. She was the youngest of nine children, four other girls and four boys.

Herbert and Hannah were married April 5, 1893 in New York City and soon after moved to Stockton, Illinois.

Herbert was employed at various occupations which included caretaker of "Oakdale Camp" grounds near South Freeport, Illinois. Many people came there from all over the United States. Several moves were made during their stay in Illinois. All seven children were born in that area, three girls and four boys: Grace, Clyde, Paul, Florence, Carl, Arthur and Ann (twins).

In 1913 they decided they wanted a farm of their own so they purchased one in Hammond Township, Polk county. They moved by train from Illinois in March. They were greeted at Beltrami by new neighbors, taken to their home in a jumper (home built on runners) they were pulled by two Montana mustangs and they followed no roads, just cut across country.

Crops were mostly wheat, flax, and corn. Herbert had brought seed corn from Illinois, first of its kind. They turned out a very good crop as it was a long growing season.

A "Booster Farmer's Club" was organized, with meetings once a month, programs, dinners, arts and crafts and produce displayed, then judged with prizes awarded.

In 1915 Herbert was school director of district 220. Five of the Avery's were attending at that time.

The 1918 flu epidemic came, people nursed and helped care for many, near and far; many died, although others lived because of care and concern of neighbors and friends. Neighborliness and good deeds were a part of rural living.

There was Sunday school and church every week with dedicated parents seeing that all had religious contacts and training.

The Averys lived in the Crookston vicinity until Hannah's death, July 24, 1947; there Herbert made his home with his daughters, Grace of here, and Ann of Minot, North Dakota. He died May, 1949.

Herbert and Hannah's children are Grace Avery Newhouse, homemaker and housewife, born February 1, 1894; Clyde Herbert Avery, salesman, born January 19, 1896; Paul Richard Avery, farmer, born January 18, 1898; Florence Avery Davis, teacher, born August 28, 1899; Carl Frederic Avery, tool maker, born June 20, 1901; Arthur William Avery, mechanic, born May 12, 1903; Ann Avery Schmunk, teacher, born May 12, 1903.

JAMES DEWAR

James Dewar, born in Perth, Scotland January 16, 1846 sailed to Canada with his family on the "Glenmanna" at the age of eight. Hours of dread and pain were endured during the roar of wind storms, causing fear of shipwreck, during the 58-day trip. This trip was made during the Crimean War, in which an uncle, Robert Dewar was killed. A cholera epidemic on board killed all infants, except his infant sister, Kittie, who died upon arrival in Canada. After a brief stay in Montreal, the family traveled to Trempealeau, Wisconsin.

At nineteen Mr. Dewar enlisted for duty in the Civil War but was rejected because his weight was under one hundred pounds. He subsequently joined bridge builders going to Vicksburg, and later was bookkeeper on a cotton plantation at Covington, Tennessee.

Mr. Dewar returned to Wisconsin in 1868 and married Wilhelmina Dopp and to them one son, John Dopp Dewar, former longtime resident of Beltrami, Minnesota was born. Following his wife's death, he came to Crookston in 1882. In 1883 he married Agnes Valance Samson, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Somson (Annie Dewar), her brother and his sister, in Hammond Township. The Dewars also settled in Hammond, taking part of their farm as a tree claim.

District 220 school house, commonly called the Dewar School, was built in 1895 on land donated by the pioneer farmer, James Dewar. His nephew, Wallace J. Samson, was the first teacher. Dewar was one of the first school officers, along with his cousin, William Rattray, and H. A. Tofesly. Dewar served as school officer many years and as chairman of supervisors for Hammond Township for over forty-five years. For several decades, Sunday school was conducted in the Dewar School to serve the area. "Grandpa" Dewar, as he was affectionately called by many, served as superintendent and his wife as a teacher. Traditionally, the Fourth of July community picnics were held at the Dewar homestead.

On the windswept prairie, the Dewars endured three-three day blizzards one winter alone, 1896-7. On the third day of an extremely severe blizzard, Mr. Dewar made his way to the barn with the use of a long rope kept handy for that purpose. With a bobsled a trip to Crookston for supplies took three to four hours each way. Ten 100-pound sacks of flour were purchased each fall and shared with neighbors when necessary.

Children of James and Agnes Dewar were William Samson (1884-1911), Walter James (1886-1967), Mrs. C. R. Emerson (Ruby), Virginia, Minnesota, Mrs. E. E. Luhman (Annie Laurie), Foston, and Esther Dewar of Minneapolis.
As an early farmer in Hammond, Walter James Dewar was highly regarded as a mechanic and operator of steam driven, community-owned equipment and in 1912 built for his own use one of the earliest gasoline-powered tractors in the area. Walter traveled extensively in the West and South, first by train and later by car. His first trip in a car with his family to Texas was made in 1922. Poor roads were often encountered and on an especially muddy road in Iowa, the total mileage for one day was twenty-seven miles. His daughter, Mrs. Arvid L. Hermodson (Alta), continues to reside on the Hammond township farm, settled in 1882 by her grandfather.

Other direct descendants of James Dewar include the Hermodson children, Arlen, Alden, and Arvadelle; Walter's son, Dorel James Dewar, on the staff of the Crookston post office since 1938, and his children, Dorel James, Jr., Loleta, and Sharon. The Emersons at Virginia have two children, Ralph, and Ruth and five grandchildren. The Luhman family include James, Wallace, and Gladys and seven grandchildren.

KENNETH MILLER

The children of Kenneth and Merle Miller are the fourth generation of Millers to live on that Hammond township farm, about nine miles south of Crookston. The Ken Miller family are descendants of pioneer Crookston and Hammond Township residents.

Lorenzo Miller homesteaded the quarter-section on which the present farm buildings are located. He came to this area from Ontario with his brother, Nelson Miller, in 1891. Lorenzo married Louise Dodds, also from Eastern Canada. They became the parents of three children. A. Dodds Miller who is now retired from farming and lives in Colorado Springs; Cora Miller who died in her twenties; and Arthur Ross Miller, father of Kenneth, who was born in 1898 and died in 1963.

Arthur grew up on the present farm, attended the “Round” school as the country school in that area was called, and business college in Crookston. He married a Crookston girl, Emma Waterstrat, whose parents were also Crookston residents. Both William and Karoline (Ekstein) Waterstrat came to this county from Germany, he in 1881, she in 1891. Mr. Waterstrat was a carpenter; building, among other homes, the home at 823 North Main, where Mrs. Arthur Miller now lives. Emma Waterstrat Miller is a graduate of Central High School, Moorhead State Teachers College, and taught in several schools before her marriage to Arthur.

Arthur and Emma Miller continued to reside on the original homestead and became the parents of two boys, Kenneth and Harlalan. Harlalan married Janice Kuske of Olivia in October 1957, and farmed for a short while before going into service. He was killed in an accident at Fort Campbell, Kentucky in December 1960. They were parents of Gregory Harlan, born in June 1961. Janice remarried and now lives in St. Paul with her husband, Dr. John Sargent and their children: Greg, Louis, Jean Ann and Timothy.

Kenneth married Merle Stone, December 26, 1950. Merle is the daughter of Walter Powell and Alice Lee Stone.

Walter was the son of Nathan Perry Stone, who with his wife, Ada Powell Stone, came to Crookston from Prescott Wisconsin in 1879, and founded N. P. Stone Company: International Harvester dealers, as well as retail coal and stoker merchants. They were in business until 1955. Walter was one of five children, the others being William, Ida, Gertrude and Lucia. Walter and William took over the implement business from their father and continued in it until their deaths. Alice Lee Stone came to Crookston from Hudson, Wisconsin in 1917. They both lived in the Crookston Public Schools. She was a native of Hudson and the daughter of John Andrew and Carrie Holter Lee, both of whom had come from Norway at the age of nineteen. John Lee was a contractor and was active in the construction business in Hudson. In 1928 he and his son Arthur, an architect, came to Crookston and built the Walter Stone home at 115 East Eight Street, which the family occupied until July 1974, then it was purchased by the Dick Maves family. Walter and Alice Stone were parents of four daughters.

This picture taken in early 1900s. W. P. Stone, father of Mrs. Ken Miller is the hunter right behind the car driver.

Merle (Mrs. Ken Miller); Norma (Mrs. Glenn Lewis, Moscow, Idaho); Shirli (Mrs. Ernest Ager, Seattle, Washington); and Margaret (Mrs. Fred Harris, Richmond, Kentucky). Mrs. Walter Stone has seventeen grandchildren and now resides at St. Francis Residence.

Ken and Merle Miller are residing on the original homestead, and have been there since their marriage in December, 1950, except for two years during which Ken was in the U.S. Army. Their son, Kenneth, Jr. was born on December 25, 1951 at Ft. Smith, Arkansas, and spent his first year in Babenhagen, Germany with his parents. Upon returning to Crookston, Ken and Merle moved into the Miller home, while Arthur Millers moved to town and took up residence in the Waterstrat home. On May 9, 1955, Janna Lee Miller was born and another daughter, Julie Ann, was born on March 11, 1958. All three children attended the Crookston Public Schools, and were active in music groups throughout the years. Ken is a cellist, studying in Cincinnati, and playing in the Dayton Symphony and String Quartet. He married Linda Baylis, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Shelby Baylis of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan on August 29, 1975. She is also a cellist and studies in Cincinnati. Janna is a junior and vocal major at the University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and Julie is a high school senior, plays the harp, and plans to attend the University of Minnesota. It might be interesting to note that the Ken Miller children all attended the Franklin Grade School, in which their grandmother once taught, and which their great-grandfather, N. P. Stone was active in acquiring the land for, and in its being built.

The Ken Miller Family.
Ken is a graduate of the Northwest School of Agriculture, Crookston, served in the United States Army for two years, and attended the University of Minnesota. He is treasurer of Hammond township, on the board of the Crookston Farmers Co-op Elevator, a member of the board of the Farmers Home Administration, a deacon of the First Presbyterian Church, and past elder and trustee of the church. Merle is a graduate of Central High School, the University of Minnesota, and has her M.A. degree from Columbia University. She was a string teacher before her marriage, and has now retired after seventeen years in the Crookston Public Schools. She recently retired as choir director of the Presbyterian Church choir after twenty-two years in that position. She is a member of, and past president of the Crookston Woman’s Club, member of the board and president of the Crookston Civic Music League, and a member of the Grand Forks Symphony since 1950.

MARVIN REITMEIER

In 1946 we were married and settled on the farm where we have lived ever since. It was previously owned by Louis Larson. Few farms had electricity then, but in about three years power lines came through and also telephone lines. We had a few milk cows and chickens. Until we acquired a beet contract together with Lester and Clifford Skrivseth, we farmed only 160 acres. We later rented and bought more land, which we now farm in partnership with our son Leroy.

Our oldest daughter, Janice, is married to Edward Beil. They live in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, have two children, Paula, six; and Jeffrey, three. She is a registered nurse and Edward works with Burlington Northern, personnel division. Leroy, 27, lives in Crookston, married to the former Mary Thiibert. They have two girls, Shauna, four, and Shelby, two. Leroy is kept busy with the farm, Lou Anne, 24, South Saint Paul, a graduate of University of North Dakota is now employed by Cenex as matchmaker, matching applicants to jobs in a nine-state area. Jolen, 15, a sophomore at Central high school at Crookston, is kept busy with her horses and school activities. She's an active member of Agassiz Riders Club and rides in area horse shows.

We are members of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Crookston where Marvin has been past council member, Jolene sings in the senior choir and I belong to the Ladies Aid, of which I was past president.

Our parents were Edward and Ida (nee Wentzel) Reitmeier, Crookston and Isaac and Julia (nee Anderson) Jorgenson, Fisher. My grandfather, A. G. Anderson of Fisher, was the first person to take out homestead rights in Polk County. My mother, Mrs. Jorgenson, now lives at Tufte Manor, a retirement home in Grand Forks. Isaac Jorgenson, now deceased, farmed west of Fisher and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Reitmeier, both deceased, farmed northwest of Crookston.

As the years pass, it seems to be more busy with the use of chemicals and fertilizers in farming. Marvin was elected County Commissioner last fall. This also keeps him busy with meetings etc. I am kept busy with church and community activities, and keeping up a farm home.

We have experienced many changes and improvements in nearly thirty years of farming south of Crookston.

MARTINUS L. SKRIVSETH

Martinus L. Skrivseth came to America at the age of seven, the youngest of six children of Lars and Molli Skrivseth. They sailed from Trondheim, Norway in 1872 and first settled in Freeborn County (Albert Lee), Minnesota, where they lived in a sod house for a short time.

The eldest son, Lars L. stayed in Freeborn County and farmed. The rest of the family went by oxen and horse and wagon to the Mayville and Hillsboro area, in North Dakota, and then to Buxton, where they farmed nearby. Busjen L. remained there for the rest of his life. Lars and Molli, and their sons, Jacob L., Tore L. and Martinus L., resettled in Crookston. A daughter, Anna, married Ole Flaten of Moorhead, Minnesota, who owned and operated the Flaten Photo Gallery.

Jacob L. opened a photo studio and built the Skrivseth Block, a two story brick structure now occupied by the Houske Funeral Home. He stayed in Crookston for several years and then sold out and became a veteran photographer in North Dakota; first at Minot, then at Williston. He was credited with locating the largest petrified tree east of the Rockies in the Williston area in 1931.

Tore L. purchased farmland in Russia Township and built his own home and farm buildings. His property was one mile east of that purchased by his brother, Martinus. Several years later Tore traded his farm for one north of Bemidji. In his spare time he built a number of fine violins.

Martinus L. bought the southeast quarter of Section 12 in Hammond township, on December 4, 1899 from Charles Duval for $2750. Then on November 21, 1905 he obtained one-half section adjoining land in Russia township from the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad Company for $3285.48.

In 1903 he married Bergit Brokken, who was born in Kristiansand, the southern most point in Norway, although the family farm was 103 miles inland. She sailed to America in 1899 at seventeen years of age with her brother Osmund and sister Julia in a three-week crossing. They arrived in Quebec, Canada. From there they went by train to Chicago, and finally to Grand Forks, North Dakota. During her years there she operated a weaving machine in a Woolen Mills Company as their first female employee.

Lars and Molli, the parents of Martinus, lived with him the last years of their lives. Lars, at 82 years of age, would walk to Crookston and back in one day, a distance of twenty miles.

From 1915 to 1918 Martinus sponsored and paid passage for three of Bergit’s nephews from Kristiansand: Knute, Dreg, and John Jerden, one each year. They would work for him one year, learn the language, and then move on to make
room for the next brother.

In 1918 Martinus built the first all modern farmhouse in Polk county and served on the school board until he retired. They raised three sons and one daughter. Lester and Clifford who farmed the home place until 1943, now reside in Crookston. Lester was on the Hammond Township board for 26 years. Melvyn lived in Seattle, Washington most of his adult life, and Myrtle, Mrs. Louis A. Benson, resides in San Diego, California. They also raised three sons by previous marriages, Selmer and Edwin Skrivseth and Obie Thompson.

Clifford, while living in Crookston, owned two Dairy Queens, and had partnership in Our Own Hardware Store and Westinghouse Appliance for a time.

Helgeland Township History

A man by the name of P. M. Peterson was the first man to come to the Helgeland area. He returned to Norway with favorable reports of the area and as a result more people came to this area. John Tatro came down from Canada and homesteaded the Southeast quarter of Section 10 in 1891. His brother, Frank, claimed the Northwest Quarter Section 22.

A man by the name of Ben Sandstrud built the first two schools in the area. Maude Fisk and Mabel Roan were the first teachers in these schools. This was in 1909. Lars Hoff also taught early terms. The first meeting of the township was held at a special meeting at the Sandstrud school house on January 29, 1901. The meeting was called to order by Ben Sandstrud. B. J. Williams was chosen to preside as moderator and stated that the order of business at this meeting was to elect town officers. No by-laws were approved at this meeting. The following officers were elected on the first town board of Helgeland Township: Christian Andreasson, chairman; Ben Sandstrud, clerk; Elling Olson, treasurer; Martin Carlson, assessor; Lars Hoff, and Peter Holden, Justices of the Peace; Frank Tatro, and Alfred Abelson, constables.

On October 16 at a special meeting the first official act of the town occurred when they decided to buy a road grader. It was decided to loan the grader to taxpayers at a rate of 50¢ per day. Each user to be assessed a one dollar fine if they did not grease the mouldboard after they were finished using the grader.

In order to draw a comparison with those days and the present, I shall relate a case in the township on April 19, 1905. The full board met to consider the request for aid by a town resident. The town officers checked the legality of his claim. After due deliberation that according to law he should be given ten days to depart to Wadena County from whence he had come. In October of that year he was returned with his family to Wadena County.

The soil in Helgeland is of sandy loam nature and over the years the nature of farming has been diversified. The main change has been the use of more of the land for grain farming. The dairy herds are very few in number but much larger sized herds.

Helgeland is one of the few townships that has a large share of young farmers. This should be good for the future of the township.

RECOLLECTIONS OF HOME IN HELGELAND TOWNSHIP

I remember Dad taking us to school in the winter time on a manure sled, pulled by two horses. Tom and Jerry, wrapped in a cocoon of several quilts, so cuddly and warm, and Dad in his sheepskin coat. I remember the whole family around a round oak table with a kerosene lamp in the center. Mom was so afraid of lamps. She used only one lamp at a time and it was always in her possession. I remember how scary detective shows sounded on the radio. We would rush home from school in time to hear "The Lone Ranger", and the whole family gathered around listening to Fibber McGee and Molly, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Art Linkletter and others. I remember learning to dance in the kitchen to a live band in the living room; my Dad and the Sannes brothers, Albert, Ted and Knute. They had a violin, piano, mandolin and guitar. My Dad could play almost any instrument and he never had a music lesson. Often after supper, Dad would spend an hour or so singing and playing his mandolin. He liked to harmonize with me at the piano. He was a little proud of his bass voice. I loved to be with Dad as he was always singing or whistling as he worked.

On was we always swept and washed the out-house, and then rinsed it with lysol water. I remember walks to the out-house in the dark; though I knew there were no wolves and bears in the grove, panic would overcome me half-way back and I would make a mad dash for the house!

I remember a shiny potbelly stove with isinglass windows and the drying mittens and frozen clothes on it. On wash day we hauled pails of water from the well, starting early in the morning. I remember the gas machine that went "put-put" and the hogs that went from the manure to the hanging. Then there were Ladies Aid big clothes on the line most of the day, putting some clothes in a starch solution, drying and then sprinkling with water and wrapping them for ironing the next day. I remember heating flat-irons on the big kitchen range, alternating a cooled one with a hot. On these we had to keep the pressure pumped up on. We also had one of those big black reservoir ranges.

I can still see the dozens of loaves of bread Mom baked every week. On baking day she would make scones which would be flattened out on the cold pan to roll. They were best to eat warm with butter and sugar. Another treat was a slice of day old home-made bread with cream and sugar. I remember the thousands of jars of canning Mom did which were stored on shelves in the cellar. How hard she worked on those hot days! She also canned chickens and beef and pork. We had an icebox but it was tiny and nothing could be frozen. The well was better to keep food cool, and the good water that came from the pump, never tasted as good when it was piped into our home.

Fall was a time to cut wood for the winter. There were woods to the north of our farm. Fall was also time to put tarpaper around the house foundation and pile fresh cow manure about two feet high. I don't remember this stinking, I remember how much warmer the house felt! In the spring this manure was taken and spread on the fields.

Our toys were made out of boxes and orange crates, leaves from trees were our money; wheels and tires were pushed about pretending them to be cars, we climbed trees or just daydreamed out behind the grove. For a while we were involved with attempting to fly, using a flour sack tied to feet and hands as we attempted higher jumps from the sheep shed to the windmill. I never was able to fly!

We seldom went any place except to a close neighbor to visit on a Sunday afternoon. We never had a babysitter. Neighbors would visit and it was always the whole family. I don't remember having to have invitations to visit. We always had to be home in the morning and evening at a certain time to milk cows. About once a year we would visit an aunt and uncle in Crookston or Grand Forks.

In Mom and Dad's whole married life, I don't think they were ever more than thirty miles from home. They never had a vacation. I remember many gatherings at Grandma's. The highlights of the year were the Farmer's Club picnic, end of the school picnic, the Christmas programs at church and school, and the Marshall Courts of Fair. Then there were Ladies Aid dinners at the church and monthly Farmer's Club meetings where we often got our first experience at performing before a group.

Usually in the fall of the year a big order would come from Sears-Roebuck or Wards. In it would be warm clothes for win-