Article 3: Tree Claims — Any person who would plant 10 acres of trees in rows by government specifications, which had to be at least 670 living trees the third year, got 160 acres of land.

The reason for the tree claims was to get shelter places on the prairie for building sights. It is almost unbelievable to think that the valley during territorial times had no trees except along the rivers and lakes. It was a vast prairie of native buffalo and blue stem grass. After many prairie fires in the late 1800s-1905 many poplar and willow trees started growing and became thick woods on land that was once open prairie.

Many pioneer settlers came by railroad and steamboat. Others came by prairie schooners drawn by oxen or horses, and carried all their belongings with them. No matter how they came or where they came from, they all came to make a home and a good life in the Red River Valley.

The study of local history may provide some insight into the past and the future. It should be noted that Polk County and the Red River Valley have always been an important part of world history.

AN “INDIAN” WEDDING

No prettier marriage ceremony conducted under such auspicious circumstances has ever been solemnized in the city of Crookston as that which bound Miss Bertha Morgan and O. O. Sundet of this city at the Red Men’s hall and was witnessed by 350 friends and relatives of the happy contracting young people.

Bertha Morgan and O. O. Sundet were united in marriage on May 10, 1904. The civil ceremony was performed by Judge McLean at the city hall. Bridesmaids were Miss Josephine Gjerde and Miss Bertha Trones. The groom was attended by V. A. Anderson, O. C. Moe and Henry Morgan, brother of the bride. The bride and her attendants were elegantly attired in the fashion of the day, and the groom in traditional formal wear.

Following the ceremony the newly married couple were driven to the Odd Fellows hall where a band of 24 members of the Improved Order of Red Men of Crookston led in the Indian marriage rituals.

In lieu of the traditional pony, the bride entered in a sedan chair borne by six braves, as the orchestra played “Anona”. As she rose to her feet, she was draped in a colorful blanket. The groom was attired in a full suit of fringed buckskins.

All three floors of the Odd Fellows hall were used to entertain the guests. In the largest hall tepees had been set up, to which the bridal party were escorted first. Here they were entertained by the braves dancing the marriage dance accompanied by kettle drums, uttering cries of “Ki Vi” much to the enjoyment of the spectators.

Both the upper floors were used for dancing, one for Riggs orchestra and the other the Silken Strings.

At midnight a sumptuous banquet was provided on the first floor. One hundred and fifty guests were served at one time. Gilbert Bang catered the dinner which was attended by members of the city council and other city officials. The tables were beautifully decorated with cut flowers and a huge wedding cake.

Mayor Chesterman gave a short address following which the bride and groom were presented with numerous wedding gifts, some of which are still in the Sundet family; namely, a dining room set given to the couple by Charlie Kiewel.

Everyone offered greetings but perhaps the most unusual greeting was that of the Red Men which said in essence: “May the new tepee be ever pitched in pleasant places among forests filled with game.”

O. O. Sundet is the father of Russel Sundet of the Hobby Shop of Crookston.

The account of the wedding was reported in many papers throughout the state for no more unique or pretty wedding was ever solemnized in the city of Crookston and Red Men did themselves proud and proved royal entertainers.

Ole Jevning’s Log House

Climax, Minnesota

If walls could talk, what kind of stories would they have to tell? What kind of struggles and hardships went into the building of a home in the late 1800’s? How much history has been recorded within the walls of an old log house which knew several generations as its tenants?

The log house built by Ole Jevning in 1876 was recently donated to the Polk County Historical Society at Crookston, Minnesota. Taken apart with great care, the logs of the house were numbered in order that the home might be rebuilt on the grounds of the new Polk County Historical Site located on Highway 2 east of Robert’s Café in Crookston. The entire house is now in possession of the Historical Society. Carved on the ends of one of the logs was the name, Ole Jevning, 1876.

Ole Jevning, Sr. left his homeland of Bardu, northern Norway, on May 7, 1866. Traveling to the United States and to Freeborn County, Minnesota, he arrived during the latter part of August that same year. For the next two years, Jevning worked as a carpenter, trade which was invaluable in the years that followed, for he was later detailed to the building of homes for the members of the company with whom he traveled.

Joining a government supply train in 1869, Jevning worked as a cook while traveling from St. Cloud to Fort Abercrombie. Returning to St. Cloud later he received orders to haul supplies from Sauk Rapids up the Mississippi River to Fort Ripley. He was later ordered to Fort Snelling, arriving at Christmas and remaining until March.

He took a homestead claim in Ottertail County in 1869 which he held for two years before letting the land revert to the government.

During the summer of 1871, Ole Jevning traveled to the Red River Valley with the Ole Estenson family and with Peter Satermo. At that time there were no roads, not even a trail, and the rivers had high banks and muddy bottoms. At one point the company had to build a bridge of elm logs in order to cross the Wild Rice River.

They wondered about in search of good land, little knowing where they were going. One day, they noticed bits of bark on the prairie which told the tale of a recent flood, and they pushed on to the Sand Hill River where the land appeared more satisfactory. Eventually they found themselves near the Red River and Grand Forks, N.D. which had but one building, a combined residence and store belonging to the Hudson Bay Company.

On June 10, 1871, they reached the land in the Red River Valley on which they settled. Jevning selected a site in section 14, Township 108 south, Range 2 west, which is now four miles west of the village of Climax, Minnesota. There were no residents north of his site at that time.

Being an experienced builder, it was Jevning’s job to build the homes they were to live in; while the others broke the land for farming. The first house, a log structure 20 by 24 feet, was built for Ole Estenson, Sr. Ole Jevning spent the days preparing the logs while the other men of the party assisted by hauling them to the site and peeling off the bark during the evening hours. The roof consisted of poles and long bunches of prairie grass. The house had no floor, windows, or door and a rainstorm during the night wet their hay bed and set their shoes to floating.

Ole Jevning lived in his “prairie schooner” until fall when he completed his own log house, a cabin of 16 by 16 feet covered with straw and sod. In 1872, he married Ingeborg Estenson and brought his bride to live in the sod-roofed cabin with a dirt floor.

A larger home was built for the family in 1876, approximately 18 by 30 feet in dimension. Built of solid oak, the logs were cut off from the land surrounding the farm site.

Can you imagine what went into the building of a story and a half home when the only tools available were a saw and an axe?
An expert at his trade, Ole mitered the corners and used huge wooden pegs to hold the logs together. The pegs were also known by the name of a bird. When the house was finished, the Jevnings were the proud owners of a two-bedroom home.

There is no record of how long it took to build the home, nor what cost it involved in man hours, sweat, and pains-taking labor. But, it proved to be a home that lasted through generation after generation from the time of its building in 1876 to the early part of 1976 when it was vacated to be moved to the Historical Park County Museum, Crookston.

Ole Jevning and his wife became the parents of nine children. It is a known fact that Jevning spent winters making bob-sleds for himself and his neighbors while his wife tended the chores, spun yarn and knit warm garments for the family. The Jevning farm became known as a place where a man could find shelter and food when in need.

Years later, the Jevning's youngest daughter, Olive, married Cecil Neil who rented the home farm and bought it in the early 1930s. In turn, the Neil's son, Robert, rented and ought the farm from his father. The grandson of the late Ole Jevning, Robert Neil, his wife, Lou Ann, and family lived in the original building until this spring 1976. Naturally there were improvements, but the original log structure remained.

Robert Neil sold the home place to another great-grandson, Arlen Larson of Climax, who built a new home on the original farm site in 1975. Mr. and Mrs. Arlen Larson and sons, Benjamin and Matthew, are the present generation to occupy the site and farm the land once owned by Ole Jevning.

LAKEVIEW HOTEL, CROOKSTON'S FIRST "BOARD AND BUNK" HOTEL

by Edward Boh

Grandfather met Grandmother in Nebraska, where he was employed by the Union Pacific Railway Company, in the years of 1863 or 1864. At that time, he was working on a surveying crew for the rail line. The crew was locating sites for bridges for the proposed route of a new railway. The crew was in or near Ogallala, Nebraska, when he met Grandmother. Grandmother told the story to my mother, who kept the details of the story. Grandmother was about 14 years old at the time. She was with her father and several other picking summer berries near the camp of the railway people. Grandfather and several other workmen were cutting down some small trees, when they called attention to Grandmother. Grandfather told Grandmother that his name was Ole and he had been sent to Nebraska to work on the new railway, to locate it. Grandmother did not know Ole, but was somewhat taken by his eye, figure, and air. The two were married the following June. Grandmother was 14 years old and Ole was about 21, and was "adopted" by all of the German ladies, and treated as if she were just another immigrant like themselves.

By the time she had reached 21, she had become an excellent cook, and she knew as much German as she did English, and because of her blue eyes, few ever knew she was an Indian.

It was late in the summer of 1871, when a friend of Grandfather's, who had been with him in Nebraska, and South Dakota, and was now employed by the St. Paul and Pacific Railway, came to him with the offer of a job in northern Minnesota. The job, was on the new railway line at $2.35 a day for a ten-hour day, of which, over $50 of his top wages in that era. My grandparents packed their belongings and were given passage to St. Paul, and then on north to the site which was to become Crookston. Grandmother said that she would always remember the day as they set forth on their journey. It was November 3, the date she claimed as her birthday, and she was 21 years old that day.

Upon their arrival, they were given a small shack, located near what is now Third Street, about a block and a half east of the river. The "cook shack" for the railway was near this site, and Grandmother was employed as an assistant cook. She said that she baked the bread and biscuits for the crew, which they ate by the hundreds. Grandmother was an excellent cook, and German style prosperity was a "treat" for the hungry crew.

In the fall of 1872, my grandfather obtained a small piece of land on the lake, located in the approximate area of Broadway, and Fifth and Sixth Streets. Grandfather foresaw the coming of settlement and made a decision to locate here in the new settlement. In 1873, he and his half-brother, Dennis Hambrecht Sr., and a man called "Slats" Sheldon (or Shelton) built a 12 or 15 room hotel, which was called a "Board and Bunk" house in those days. Their family quarters were located "downstairs" and at the front part of the structure.

They opened what they called the "Lakeview Hotel", and operated the establishment till the fall of 1878, when a "coal oil" stove exploded in a guest's room and started a fire. The fire started in the rear section of the building, and spread upwards at the back of the building. An alarm was sounded that a fire had broken out in the settlement, and responding to the fire call were many of the employees of the railway. Countless buckets of water from the nearby lake were poured onto the burning building. When the fire was put out, about one third of the building had been destroyed. Grandfather removed the burned section of the building and constructed a new rear wall, greatly reducing the capacity of the hotel.

By 1887, Grandfather had the hotel 20 miles away from home working on the bridge gangs. Grandmother was doing the cooking and with the help of a chambermaid was keeping the hotel going. In the fall of that year, outside work was slackened because of the bitter cold winter and Grandfather took employment in what was to become Red Lake Falls, Minnesota. Here he was employed as a carpenter, building on a grain elevator and milling company. In the spring of 1880, they sold the hotel to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Laschapel, who were new arrivals in the settlement. They operated the hotel for several years following the purchase, adding several additions to the hotel. A short while after they purchased the hotel, they built a livery stable about a half block south of the hotel.

My Grandparents, Henry and Julia Boh, left Crookston briefly and made their home in Red Lake Falls, where my father, John F. Boh, was born on June 4, 1894. My family returned to Crookston in 1884, making their home there the rest of their days. A second son, Harry, was born there in the following years. Grandfather worked in the building trades till the time of his death about 1918. My father, John F. Boh, was employed at the Walker saw mill for a short period, and then took employment with the local post office working as a postal clerk until the time of his death in 1932. Harry, my father's brother, was a handicapped person, suffering from hunchback. It was a stone cutter for one of the local marbleworks and died at an early age. Grandmother lived her life with my father, following the death of her husband, Henry, Sr.

Grandmother never told anyone of her Indian blood, and as she had mastered the German language, being able to read and write it, many believed she was of German descent. Grand-