Onstad Township

Ole P. Onstad, an immigrant from Norway, was honored in the naming of Onstad Township, of which he was a pioneer, some time prior to its organization in 1882.

Earliest records of Onstad Township are not available. The first records on file are from 1884, two years after the town was organized. The first birth recorded in Onstad was that of Carol Alberth Bergh, June 11, 1883. There were four babies born in that township that year. The first death in the township was July 25, 1883, the death of the infant son of Lars P. Olatad. There were four school districts in Onstad Township in the early part of the century.

Melvin, Minnesota at one time was a little community and trading center, grown up around the railroad tracks. The old Melvin store building still stands, having been moved across highway 32 on its present site, empty. The Spring Gravel Company, located in Onstad township is still in full operation, and supplies gravel and sand over a wide area. During the summer months many railroad cars bring the gravel to various points.

Current Onstad township board includes Marvin Halstad, chairman; Steve Urness, Lawrence Ricard, supervisors; Daniel Wilken, clerk; Vernon Floan, treasurer.

HAFTER B. HAFTERSON

Hafter B. Hafterson was born in Norway, March 24, 1860, to Anna and Bersvend Hafterson. They came to the United States in 1865. Hafters' little baby brother died on board ship, about a day's journey from New York. The baby was not tossed overboard but was kept wrapped in blankets. After they had landed in New York, they found a little cemetery in which they buried the baby.

The family then went on by train to Waukon, Iowa, where they lived for some time. In 1883 Hafter married Sarah Olson and they settled down in Onstad Township in Polk County. Five children were born to them: Bennie, Alton, Carola, Hannah, and a still-born baby boy. Sarah passed away a few days after the baby was born.

In 1894 Hafter married Belle Olson, a sister of Sarah. He married the oldest and the youngest daughters in the Olson family. Eight children were born to Belle and Hafter: Harry, Melvin, Willie, Inga, Oluf, Ruth, and Irene.

From these two marriages there are five children still living: Mrs. Hannah Monson, Sioux City, Iowa; Willie Hafterson, Westwood, California; Oluf Hafterson, Fargo, North Dakota; Mrs. Ruth Kensing, Crookston, Minnesota; and Mrs. Walter W. (Irene) Hanson, Crookston, Minnesota.

Hafters' first home was a sod house, and then a one-room frame house. Some time later he built a large frame house and other farm buildings on their tree-claim farm. This farm was sold in the late forties. All the buildings are still there and kept in very good condition.

During the early years the family endured many hardships. Hauling wood for fuel on a sleigh in winter from Maple Bay, a thirty-mile round trip, was often a difficult task. Besides the sub-zero temperature, the day often ended in a high blizzard on their return trip. The horses became so frosty they could scarcely see. Often Hafter got out of the sleigh to pick out the ice and snow from their eyes and nostrils. He had to rely on the horses' judgment to find the way home in the snow storm.

Two tragic events saddened their lives when death took two at a time within a week. In the spring of 1900 Bennie and Alton died of diptheria, and in the winter of 1903 Inga and Annie died of scarlet fever.

Family worship and prayer were very important in their home and a source of strength during these hardships. Their home became their house of worship and Sunday School too, as the nearest church was three miles away. They sent for Sunday School pamphlets and Bible-Story books to read.

One of the many high-lights for the whole family was attending the annual camp meeting in June of the First Church of God at Grand Forks, North Dakota.
Hafter served on the Church of God Board of Trustees, on the rural school board, and on the township board.

The family's pride and joy was their first car, a 1909 Buick — complete with straight fenders, hard tires, side curtains, carbide lights (lit by matches), a right-hand steering wheel, and a loud fog-horn noise coming out of the rubber ball when it was squeezed. It was the first car in the neighborhood. It cost twelve hundred dollars and a team of mules. What fun it was to crank up the car and go riding! Those early roads had sharp turns but the Buick took the corners pretty well. Having been used to driving horses and mules, it was not surprising to hear Hafter say, "Whoa," as he applied the brakes to stop the car.

Hafter helped organize the Garden Valley Telephone Company. Day after day he went about getting signers. By 1912 the family telephone was installed. The telephone, too, had to be cranked.

In the fall of 1924 the family proudly owned a radio — an Atwater Kent. It had three dials, a large cone-shaped loudspeaker, and a pair of earphones. Everyone in the neighborhood came over and eagerly listened to station WDAY.

Hafter and Belle celebrated their twenty-fifth and their fortieth wedding anniversaries on the farm. In 1943 they rented the farm and moved to Crookston. Hafter, together with their four daughters, Jane, Janet, Merlene, and Frances worked on the farm and their little pet dog, Spotty. In 1944 Hafter and Belle celebrated their golden wedding with their family and friends. Belle went to be with the Lord in April, 1945 and Hafter in August, 1956.

Parnell Township

Parnell Township

Paul and Emma Magsam

Paul and Emma Magsam, were born and raised in Pennsylvania. They came to this farm in 1913. They had seven children. Father David died in 1931. Mother Martha continued to farm with her boys. After the older ones married, Paul and she continued farming until our marriage. Shortly thereafter she bought a small house in Euclid, Minnesota and lived there about fourteen years. The past ten years she has made her home with her daughter, Mrs. Frank Armstrong of Thief River Falls, Minnesota. Mr. and Mrs. Magsam were of German descent.

My father, Andrew Nielsen, was born in Germany and came to this country at the age of sixteen. His mother died shortly after he was born, and he was raised by an aunt and uncle. His two sisters and three brothers came to this country before he did. They all settled in the Omaha, Nebraska vicinity. He first worked as a farmer at Elkhorn, Nebraska. Then he moved to a farm near Omaha, Nebraska, where he met his wife, Mary Ambrust. They were married in 1877. A few years later they bought a farm near LaPlatte, Nebraska on the Missouri River. In a few years the river began to take their land so they had to look for a new farm. Through a land agent they traded their Nebraska farm for a farm in Parnell Township, Polk County, Minnesota in 1908. My father brought his farm animals and other possessions in a box car riding with them.

He arrived in Euclid, Minnesota the first day of January. A few weeks later Mother and their six oldest children came. Shortly after she came, he became very ill with pneumonia. When he was very near death, a neighbor lady came and gave him some of her "home cure" and he soon regained his health. Four more children were born to them, the youngest living only two months. Father died in 1942 of a kidney infection. Mother died in 1944 of cancer.

Rudolph Erdmann Sr.

Rudolph Erdmann was born May 6, 1857 in Velnar, East Prussia and passed away in Crookston, Minnesota, December 7, 1934. He had two sisters and one brother. On November 3, 1881, he married Augusta Rose Manteuffel. They had seven children: Anna, Emil, Henry, Emma, Rudolph, Martha and Fredrick. All were born in the United States except Anna. At the present time only Martha and Fred are living. Mr. Erdmann was a sheep herder in East Prussia before coming to the United States. They came over by boat which took six weeks. They came directly to Storm Lake, Iowa, in 1884. He worked there on the railroad and foundry. They started farming four