Peter Welter, brother of Fred, immigrated to the United States about 1881 from Luxembourg, Germany with his brothers, Fred, Nick, Casper, and Elizabeth Weyer, who, some time later, became his wife. They came to Wabasha and were employed on the Math Marx farm. Some time later, Casper left for Raymond, Iowa, and Peter, Fred and Nick went to Argyle where Fred rented the Hartz farm. When Peter got married, they lived in Argyle until he took a homestead near Puposky, where they added six children to their family: Josephine (Mrs. William Armbrust); Fred, Pinewood, Minnesota; Peter and Mathew, deceased; Mary, Sister DeChantal of Mount St. Benedict, Crookston and Catherine deceased at the age of twelve years.

Nicholas Welter came to Crookston in the early 1890's from Argyle and occupied a farm in Fairfax township south of Crookston. He married Susie Clemens of Mazeppa, Minnesota on April 16, 1894. They had four children: Fred, Waseka, Minnesota; Theodore, deceased; Andrew, (Welter Plumbing and Heating), Crookston, deceased; and George, deceased.

TILMAN WERMAGER

Tilman Wermager came to Russia Township in 1915 from Wilmington in Houston County in southern Minnesota. He came in an immigrant car on the Great Northern Railroad to Kittson Station and settled in Section Six and has lived here since that time. The first four years we lived in the place north of here in section six which is now owned by Albert Kiel. We have been on this place since 1927. Lewis Larson, a step-brother, built the buildings here in 1919. There have been dry spells and also wet ones. We always managed to make out. All in all, it was and has been a good place to live.

Tilman Wermager and Edith Iverson were married in 1923 by the Rev. P. E. Moen in Crookston. We have four sons. Truman, the only one living in Crookston, married Neva Davis. They have four children. Truman worked for Eickhoff Construction and for Minn-Dak Trucks as a mechanic.

Duane lives in Juneau, Alaska. He has four children. He is a heavy equipment operator.

Larry lives in St. Charles, Illinois. He is with the F.A.A. (Federal Aviation Association) in West Chicago. His wife is the former Mary Ann Eisert of Crookston. They have a daughter and a son.

Robert lives at Mound, Minnesota with his wife, Delores and daughters, Kimberly and Jennifer. He owns truck and dairy hauling for Bjorkland Trucking Company of Buffalo, Minnesota.

We have been members of Our Saviours Lutheran Church for forty-one years. At the present time we have twelve grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. The school house was two miles away in Hammond township. District 224, known as Prairie Rose and was often called the Skrivseth School. In the winter of 1936, the snow was deep and the temperature was 30 below zero, sometimes for many days. The children were bundled up and walked to school. Later the school closed and they were transported to Beltrami and from there to high school in Fertile.

There Larry graduated in 1953 and Robert in 1956 from Fertile, Minnesota High School. Both Duane and Larry served in the army. Duane was in Germany in the Second World War and Larry was stationed in Louisiana in 1955. Robert was in the Navy for four years following his high school graduation.

Sandsville Township

Sandsville Township is located in the northwestern part of Polk County. The first settler to come to Sandsville was Martin Sands. Martin Sands came from Kandyokoki County and selected his homestead in 1877. It is also known that Martin Sands selected homestead sites for his two brothers, Ole and Casper, and for his cousin, Martin Johnson. These people all homesteaded in the mile and one-half area south of what became known as Alvarado. Shortly after the Sands had settled, Henry Oberg, John Hendrickson, Henry Nelson, Ole Engen and Henry Hendrickson, came from the Kandyokoki and possibly the Kenvilla county areas. It was after these early settlers had lived here approximately five years that they organized Sandsville township in 1883 and the township was named in honor of its first settler, Martin Sands.

The settling and homesteading continued in the years following as Ole Lundin, Paul Hendrickson, Christ and Ole Stavig, Louis Larsson, Henry Nyquist, Axel Mathisen and others came to seek a way of life. When Sandsville township was first organized it extended one and one-half mile farther north than it does now. This one and one-half mile strip became part of Marshall county at a later date. These early settlers worked very hard trying to clear land and cultivate land for raising grain and tending their livestock. One of the biggest problems they encountered was the wet lands, causing losses and inconveniences by both spring and summer floods. It is interesting to note that in the early 1900's these early settlers were instrumental in organizing a drainage district and were successful in having a ditch 12 miles long constructed from the east directly west to the Red River. This ditch is known as the Judicial Ditch No. 1, running from Farley, Sandsville and Higdem townships. This is possibly one of the first ditches constructed in Polk county.

Sandsville township continued to be populated and we find that many homes had been established from 1890 to the early 1900's. As they prospered they built better homes. We also find that they had quite large families. Schools, churches were organized and it seemed that Alvarado and Warren became their principal place of business, although many a story is known of these farmers hauling and selling hay to various stables in East Grand Forks and Grand Forks.

In 1976 Sandsville has become less populated due to larger farm operations. New names now occur. Farming has become diversified in the areas of grain, sugar beets, and potatoes and other speciality crops. As we look back at the families who
homesteaded in Sandsville township there are only four homesteads occupied by members of the homestead family. They are those of Gottfried and Robert Hendrickson, Walter Nelson, Chester Engen, and Benneth Mathsen.

WILLIAM E. OLSON

William and I came to live in Sandsville township in 1944. We have lived and farmed the Wilson farm since that time. We are members of the Lutheran Church in Alvarado. Over the years William has served on the church board, the Alvarado school board and at the present time is on the Sandsville town board.

We are the parents of five children: Margaret, who is married to Richard A. Nelson of Oslo. They have a daughter, Karen. They live in rural East Grand Forks where they farm. She is a graduate of the University of North Dakota and is an elementary teacher. Virgil is at home and farms with his father. He attended the Area Vocational School at Thief River Falls. Carol is married to Daniel Baarstad of Nome, North Dakota. They have a son, Michael, and live in the Grafton area where he works for Production Credit Association. Both are graduates of North Dakota State University with degrees in home economics and mathematics and Vocational agriculture. Barbara is married to Bruce Wold of Thief River Falls. They have a daughter, Erinn. At the present time she lives in Bemidji, where he works as assistant manager in a grocery store and she works at the Giftillen Center. She attended Thief River Falls Junior College. Robert works as an auto mechanic in Grand Forks. He attended Moorhead Vocational School. He is married to the former Maria Trichler of Moorhead and they have two daughters, Patience and Naomi.

William’s father, Oscar L. Olson, was born in 1894 and raised in the Alvarado area. Before he began farming he was in the drapery business with his brother, Albert. From that time on he was engaged in farming until the time of his death. William’s mother, Hildeborg, came to the United States as a young girl in 1910 from Sweden. Her father was a concrete man from the old country, so he built and operated a hotel in Alvarado, which now houses a grocery store. Five children were born in this family: Dale of Alvarado, Delores (Mrs. Helmer Pearson), Alvarado, Mrs. Arla Thrall, Grand Forks, North Dakota, Ivadelle (Mrs. Mel Malmoe) of Spokane, Washington. My parents were Martha and Nels E. Nelson of Alvarado. Martha was born in Sweden in 1881 and came to this country along with her family in 1884. Nels was also born in Sweden in 1879. He came to the United States by way of Canada, where he worked for awhile in 1904. After their marriage they lived in Baudette where they were at the time of the big forest fire. They came to Alvarado area where they homesteaded and raised five children: Hjalmer of Alvarado, Andrew of Grand Forks, North Dakota, Alma, Mrs. Ernest Berg of Middle River, Inez, Mrs. Klemens Furst, Maple Plain, Minnesota and myself. Pearl. My parents were among the pioneers in the sugar beet industry when the East Grand Forks plant was first built and operated.

JOHN ORMISTON

It was about 1838 that my ancestors on my father’s side first came to the United States from Scotland. They bought land at Dover, Wisconsin, in what is still known as “The Scotch Settlement”. This land was purchased from the government for $1.25 per acre. It was here that my great-grandparents lived and are buried in the Scotch Presbyterian cemetery.

During the time the railroad was being built west into North Dakota, my grandfather, Samuel Ormiston, who was educated to be a teacher, left Wisconsin when he was twenty years old and went west to help build the railroad to the coast. He worked at making the ties with a broad axle. While doing this, he cut his instep and that left him lame so they made him a camp “cookie” and he learned to be a very good cook.

There was a camp every ten miles apart and in charge was an old Indian fighter. Around each camp they built a log breastwork about five feet high for protection. Samuel had to get up about 4 a.m. to get breakfast for the men. One morning, he heard some noise and found Indians circling the camp. He woke the rest of the men and when the fight was over they found six dead Indians. The dead Indians each had a tongue tied around his neck. The camp crew went to the next camp and found it had been wiped out. The heads of the settlers had been put up on top of the stakes and their intestines strung out on the bushes. When Samuel and his men arrived, the camp had been burned and was still smoking.

After my grandfather was married, he purchased a farm northeast of East Grand Forks and it was here that my father, John Ormiston, was born. His mother died when he was a baby so they had many hardships and later his father remarried and moved to New Folden. The soil at New Folden was rocky and not very good so when the boys were very young they had to go out working to help earn money. When my father was twelve years old, he started working on farms and often walked from New Folden to Warren and East Grand Forks to work in the harvest fields.

Wedding picture of John Ormiston and Hilda Henrickson. Attendants L. to R.: Freda Henrickson; Roy Swanson; Melvin Henrickson; Libby Ormiston.

John Ormiston married the former Hilda Henrickson of Sandsville Township, and they farmed there for their entire lives. During the 1930’s life was not easy for anyone because of the Depression, but I always felt that my parents had more than their share of hardships. They lost their crop to hail, and the wind blew their house off its foundation and killed all of their turkeys and small chickens one year. Then a few years later our home burned and we lost everything. I vividly remember those following weeks when we didn’t even have a dish towel or a wash cloth left. In spite of all these hardships, I can not remember my parents complaining or getting discouraged. They must have been from good pioneer stock.

There were four girls in the Ormiston family: Margaret, the oldest, now lives in Los Angeles, California; Irene, died when she was three years old; Evelyn, that is I, is married to
Edmund Huderle and live northeast of East Grand Forks, Minnesota: and Gladys, the youngest, married Roy Lautli and they still live on my parent’s farm in Sandia township.

GEORGE RITOCH

Out in Sandia Township, along highway 220, in a little white farm house lives Julia Ritoch, a widow, all by herself now. George Ritoch, her husband, passed away in July of 1968. Their children, grown up, have long since gone from the vicinity.

The first George Ritoch with his wife, Mary, and son, John, emigrated from Slovakia in the 1880’s and found work in Minneapolis, where they lived among Slovak friends until they moved to a forty acre farm near Tabor, but in Northland township. While in Minneapolis they lost their first son, but got two daughters. Mary and Annie. In 1893, they came to their farm in Polk county and a year later another son was born to them. They named him, George, after his father.

The Ritochs helped build the Holy Trinity Slovak Lutheran Church of Tabor and were faithful members of that church all of their lives. The girls grew up and Mary married George Fereniek at an early age and they made their home in Farley township. Annie married John Evin and they too farmed in both Polk and Marshall counties for many years before moving to Warren. When George Junior was fifteen, his father passed away after a lingering illness. Left alone with his mother, he took over the farming operations and later bought more land with a set of good buildings on the place where they were going to live. He loved horses and took good care of them in doing his farm work. All the farming was done with horses then.

George also loved “schoolarms” when the country was dotted with little white school houses. He took them to dances, for which Tabor was famous and he usually showed the girls a good time. So it was not strange that he fell in love with a school teacher, Julia Covlin, from Erskine, and they were married on August 2, 1926. His mother continued to live with them. In a few years they acquired a family of three girls and one boy. His mother passed away in 1936.

In 1935, they bought the farm in Sandia township and moved there in March. The children got their education in an Alvarado school. Dorothy, Mrs. Duane Mauch, lives in St. Croix Beach where the family is engaged in real estate business. Shirley, Mrs. William Langston, is in San Francisco and is employed by the United States Government Betty, Mrs. Kenneth White, lives in Kent, Washington, and has a pursing business from her home. Thomas looks after the farm and his mother, but also does business in Minneapolis. While living in Northland township, George Ritoch served on the school board in their district. In Sandia township, he served as town treasurer for a number of years. He also served on the education board in the Alvarado school.

The Ritoch Family 1950.

Brief History of Scandia Township

The first meeting of the Scandia township, Polk county was held on October 6, 1896. The meeting was called to order by John Stromstad. The following board was elected: chairman, Gust Christianson; supervisors, Tom Sandem. John Stromstad; treasurer, Gitle Stromstad; assessor, A. N. Mjelde; town clerk, John Clementsen; constables, B. O. Roem, Gust Linder; justice of the peace, Thor. Anderson.

All were elected unanimously with fifteen votes being cast. Their first item of business was to vote to buy road equipment, including a reversible road machine and road plow and six slush scrapers; they were to purchase them as soon as possible. At their next meeting, it seemed that the treasurer and the justice of the peace had declined their positions so two other men were appointed to fill those positions. A. N. Mjelde was appointed as treasurer and John Clementsen as justice of the peace. Bonds were fixed for all offices. Thirty-three names were registered for voting.

It is interesting to note how they carefully used their road taxes to build and maintain the roads. We also see where medicine for a family was paid for by the township. And at another meeting, a member was reimbursed for burying some horses. In May, 1906, it was decided to build a new bridge over the state ditch. The job went to T. J. Berg. He was to get $600 for the job.

The business of Scandia township is carried on at this time by the following members: chairman, Bert Tollefson; township clerk, James Larson; treasurer, Roger Larson; and supervisors, Rolland Hamre and LeRoy Opdahl.

THE SCANDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Scandia Lutheran Church was organized on November 20, 1893 as Helland Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church and located in Scandia township, Polk County. The first officers were Johan Stromstad, Nils Veen, Gust Christianson, Gitle Stromstad, and Tom Sandem. The Reverend Brynildson was the first pastor.

The congregation met until 1915 in the schoolhouse. On February 9, 1915. at the annual meeting at the home of the Christianson Brothers, members decided to build a church structure. Location selected was the northeast corner of section 27 on land owned by Tom Sandem. Alfred Christianson, G. G. Eia, Theodore Stromstad, and the Reverend O. J. Luntes were elected to serve as the building committee.

The cost of the new church was approximately $1,400. Most of the labor was donated by members of the congregation and friends. Many sacrificed their limited means and valuable time in order that the church could be built.

One of the most disastrous material catastrophes to strike Scandia congregation occurred on Sunday afternoon at approximately 4:30 p.m., August 1, 1937, when lightning struck the church spire and the church was consumed by flames in less than an hour! An eyewitness to the crash promptly spread the alarm throughout the neighborhood. To extinguish the flames was hopeless; consequently efforts were concentrated on saving the fixtures, which was done both swiftly and efficiently. The altar, the altar rail, the pulpit, the pews, the organ, and everything detachable, including a calen-