

Life on the Fraction: The Past Hundred Years

by Melvin Olaf Torkelson (1899-1982)

A true story of the early settlers on this triangle portion of land bordering the Chippewa Indian Reservation on the west—now part of Smiley Township, Pennington County, Minnesota.



This book is dedicated to the “oldtimers.”

Back Row: Anfin Torkelson, Cornelius E. Oien, John Johnson, Mrs. John Johnson, Ole Torkelson, Mathea (Mrs. Ole) Torkelson, Tobias Stene, Ingeborg (Mrs. F. T.) Satre, John Stroberg, Netta (Mrs. Anfin) Torkelson, John Kvall, Gjertine (Mrs. John) Kvall

Second Row: Anna (Mrs. Henry) Rondorf, Mrs. Karl Erickson, Anna (Mrs. Axel) Berg, Caroline (Mrs. Andrew) Odegaard, Ed Aubol, Marie (Mrs. Ed) Aubol, Halvor Halvorson

Front Row: Michael C. Burns, Martin Rockstad, Peter Engelstad, Matilda (Mrs. Peter) Engelstad, Andrew Husby, Otto Gustafson

Foreword

Few authors suffer the harsh judgment of having their works put into print without the benefit of editing, but that, with the publication of these stories, is to be the fate of our father, Melvin Torkelson. However, we believe much of this book's charm would have been lost if we had edited in the slightest, so what lies herein is exactly as he wrote it, complete with some incorrect grammar, misspellings, unfinished sentences, and even duplications.

For those of us who were lucky enough to actually hear him tell these and other stories, he comes to life again in these pages. As you read, you can see him sitting at the kitchen table with family, or with friends and neighbors who came over to visit; you can hear his voice, see the enjoyment in his face, and hear his laughter upon delivering the punch line. You can also see something that wasn't always readily visible, but always there: his sensitivity, caring and love for family, friends and "oldtimers".

We all remember his love for a good story and how he wasn't above adding an embellishment or two to improve the tale. None of us knows for sure if what is written here is totally factual, but I truly believe that in this case he tried his best to stick to the facts as he knew or had been told them.

To the best of my recollection, he wrote these stories over a period of about ten years, sitting at the kitchen table on winter evenings and using whatever paper was handy. I remember seeing him pause and think, look off into the distance, or work and then rework a period with his pencil. You can readily spot these pauses in the original manuscript by the enlarged periods, some of them in the middle of sentences.

So — with love from us, this one's for you, Daddy. Your book finally made it into print. And thanks for the memories.

Faye Torkelson
February 1989

One hundred years may be a long time, but I'll try to write a little history about it and you will find you are all tied up in a few short years. It marks such well-known things as the decolonization of Indians. But there are many things in those 100 years of history that has been forgotten and mislaid by the wayside.

What I would like to do is write of what I have been told by my parents and friends, whom to my knowledge are now all dead and gone. So I am left alone to tell of the happenings that have happened, that I have witnessed and read about. So please be patient as I am no composer.



I think the title of the story should be "Life on the Fraction - the Past Hundred Years".

1. *Determination*

It all happened between Norway and the Frontier. So I will start with my own family, namely the Anfinson and Stene families, according to records and the best of my knowledge. Anfin Anfinson, my father's oldest brother, being my uncle. He was the first one of these families to step on American soil, or thought he did. He was a single man, never did marry.¹ He worked with a boat-building firm in Norway, which started as ski builders and sleighs and spinning wheels. The first boat they made was a sailboat and strictly all wood and hard wood at that. They worked three years to complete this ship. Made their own "Oakum"² for sealing cracks and splices and also burned the tar pitch glue. The size of the boat, I do not know.

My father often spoke of "meters". What is that? One foot or three feet? Or is it "len"?³ I know that it is three feet in the Old Testament. So let us call it 40 len long or 120 feet. It had four big hand pumps for emergencies, but I guess they were a necessity according to Uncle.

They sailed for 18 days and nights. They then found land, but as they were arranging sails to land, a terrific storm came up and they went out to sea again. They discovered later that the land they saw was a corner of England. Five days later they came to Sweden, so they followed the coast to Norway. The whole crew was accounted for, but the cook, a little redhead named Axel Ston. He died at sea. He first got an itch and the skin peeled with flesh to the bone. When he died he could neither move his arms or legs. They figured he couldn't take the salt water. They boiled all of the water after that.

¹ According to several other histories including the *Bygdebok* from Rollag, Norway, Anfin was married at least twice and had several children.

² Oakum is a preparation of tarred fiber used in shipbuilding, for caulking or packing joints of timbers in wood vessels. The fibrous material used in oakum is most commonly a hemp or jute fiber impregnated with tar or a tarlike substance.

³ Len is an old Norwegian word that signified an administrative region roughly equivalent to today's counties. Perhaps Melvin meant to say "alen". Alen or Aln is a traditional Scandinavian unit of distance similar to the north German *elle*: roughly two feet. The Danish alen, also used in Norway, was just under 25 inches; the Swedish aln was just under 24 inches.

When they settled in Norway, the party broke up. If this is what America was like, they didn't want no part of it. But Old Anfin, he took what was le of the boat or ship, and started to rebuild. He was determined to make America yet. He located an old abandoned boat in Sweden that had a steam engine in it that burned wood or anything that would burn.

He picked up a crew—part Swede, part Norwegian—and spent about two or three more years. They had both sail and steam. He offered anyone that wanted to go to America. They could work their way (fare) on the boat. But no more partnership; the boat was “his and his alone.”

2. *Family Reunited*

A few years went on and no history on old Anfin was to be found. He was figured dead and gone like Leif Erickson. But one bright day came to the Anfinson's from Anfin Anfinson, now at Hawley, Clay County, Minnesota, U.S.A. America, stating if they could get enough cash to reach New York City, N.Y., to go to the Scandinavian American Bank there and they show this letter, they could be helped on their way to Hawley, Clay County, Minnesota, U.S.A.

But between Grandpa and the three sons had enough to pay the fare to Hawley, Minnesota. They came on an English cattle boat—a box-stall for the entire family. Grandma had provided with enough food for the whole family, such as lefse, flat bread, cheese and many more goodies. But no *gammelost*⁴ was allowed aboard ship.

They came to Hawley within a day or two and were glad to set foot on American soil. They found the Americans very friendly, almost all Norwegians. The train arrived at Hawley the next day at daybreak. And the Anfinsons occupied most of the space on the depot platform with all their baggage. The men were busy piling up their stuff. Grandma looked up and said, “Here comes some more immigrants.”

Three men came toward them to shake hands. Two of the men were old. One of them was short, about 5'5", but well-built and had broad shoulders and a huge scar on his right cheek from above his eye to the bottom of his jaw. He spoke up saying, “I suppose you doesn't remember me.”

Said Grandma, “*Det er Gamle Anfin.*” (“Old Anfin”) So Anfin introduced the other two, “*Det er Gamle Per.*” (Per Olson and his son, Ole Pederson).

⁴ *Gammelost* (old cheese) is made from sour skim milk to create a semisoft, blue-mold, ripened cheese with a rather sharp, aromatic flavor. The rind is brownish and the interior is brownish-yellow with a blue-green tint; these colors darken with age. It can be stored for long periods without refrigeration.

More questions were asked; where he has been all these years. He answered, "On the Atlantic."

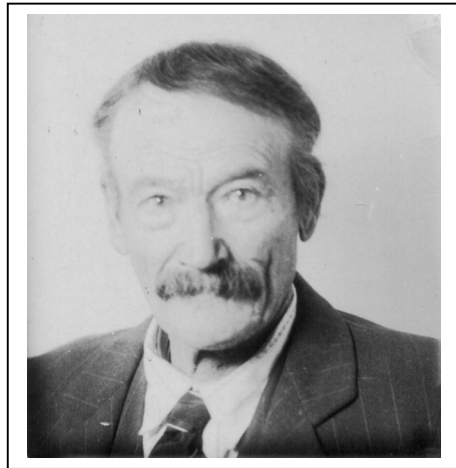
More questions about where his boat was. He answered in Norwegian, "The last I saw of 'Guri', she stood on her nose in the Atlantic."

Asked about the scar, he answered, "Ship wreck. That is my passport, known all over the Atlantic."

3. “This is IT!”

From the ruggedmost part of Norway, namely Gudbrandsdalen and Numedal in the year 1877-78 A.D.,⁵ immigrated two pioneering families. Peder Olson Stene, his wife Beret, three sons and three daughters — Olaus, Bernt, Tobias, Caroline, Hannah, and Mathea. This family settled first at Stoughton, Wisconsin. The other family—Torkel Anfinson and wife Sigri, three sons and one daughter, Anfin, Ole, Khirsten, and Kristie. This family settled at Hawley, Clay County, Minnesota. One daughter, Ellen [born Aslaug] Hendrickson, a widow with one son and one daughter, arrived five years later. She was a cripple due to infantile paralysis (polio).

Free land was the last minute news among these and other settlers; free government land up north and west. So in the spring of 1881, Anfin Torkelson, the oldest of the Anfinson sons, at what time he took the name Torkelson, his father's first name, Torkel and added “son”.



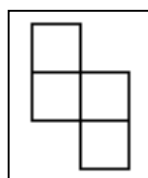
He started on his New Frontier with a few sandwiches and *lefse*⁶ walking, of course, which was the only means of transportation those days, for Crookston, which was the county seat of Polk County. He located all the descriptions and information he could there.

⁵ U.S. Census Records differ on actual emigration dates for the Stene Family. The 1900 Census lists 1887 as the emigration date; the 1910 Census lists 1885; the 1920 Census lists 1884. It appears that Mathea emigrated the same year as her parents Peder and Beret, though other siblings may have come at different times.

⁶ *Lefse* is a traditional soft flatbread made of potatoes, milk or cream, and flour. It is rolled out with a special deeply-grooved rolling pin, then cooked on a lefse griddle and turned with long wooden sticks.

He walked northeast where he came upon a saw mill with a few tarpaper shanties, which later became St. Hilaire, and all the inhabitants there were French and him a newcomer from Norway. So he picked up no news or information there.

He continued east through big swamps and brush and small lakes, as all the sloughs that had open water those days were called “lakes”. (The writer can recall many of them.) As the day was almost passed he came upon a small oak and aspen grove. Battling mosquitoes and water, he looked for section-marking stakes which were still fresh as this area had recently been surveyed. What he discovered first was a beautiful small river, and always wanting a river farm, he said to the mosquitoes, “This is IT!” Checking with his little sheet of paper from Crookston, this was now Section 5, Wyandotte Township. He selected 4 forty-acre plots like this:



This section had the most timber on it as they all classed that as the most valuable in those days.

Back to Crookston and file was the next move and then later that fall, he built his first homestead shanty which was hewed from logs. He later discovered the river he cherished so much was just a coulee where Highway 59 and State Aid Road Number 1 now cross.

Two years later when more settlers moved in, he sold his improvements to Andrew Olson Rolstad. He then had his eye on a quarter-section on the fraction now Smiley, which was all lots at that time, but now is S.W. quarter-section 32 Smiley. He built a two-story homestead shanty, 14 x 16, which was known for many years as the largest home in those parts for miles.

There is a little story of this place. Albin Arveson, a neighbor to the north, came to visit one day. And Anfin being all out of bread started a batch to raise. At

this time they agreed to visit the Braatens who had settled a short way from there. They were welcome guests and had coffee and the best of eats she had in the house and stayed to a late hour.

On arrival to Anfin's shanty, I guess the bread was more than ready for the oven. Albin told me this story himself three years ago in 1953 in the Swedish language. He said, "We met the bread dough in the doorway." Albin Arveson being the only living member of the early settlers on the fraction at this time.⁷ He lives at Neptune, which is near the Red Lake Reservation. He moved there when they opened the old reservation. He always will tell you he had to follow the Indians.



Mr. and Mrs. Anfin Torkelson and her sister, Clara Lokken, standing in front of his third log house

⁷ January, 1956

4. Leaving Hawley

The year 1883, my grandfather, Torkel Anfinson, sold his 80 acre homestead in Clay County, Minnesota. He acquired enough money to buy an old team of horses, a cow, an old wagon, nine chickens and one rooster. And on the way north, they camped near a farm one night. And these people (Norwegian, of course) had an old three-legged ewe with a small lamb.

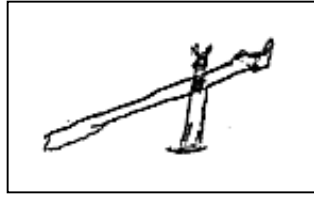
This woman that lived here complained that this darn sheep was eating her garden faster than she could plant it. So Grandpa bought the ewe and lamb for \$1.00 and loaded the whole sheep family on the wagon, which was pretty well loaded by this time. This was not a covered wagon, but wide open. All they had was table cloths, or oilcloth to cover things.

But they had good luck on their trip north. Only a half-day with showers. At night the wolves started their blood-curdling howling. The ewe and lamb came to Grandma for help. She bedded them down on the wagon where she slept. And Grandpa slept under the wagon with the old muzzle loading shotgun, which was loaded with black powder, and lots of it, plus a small handful of No. 1 buckshot. He bought this gun at Hawley; the first gun he ever owned.

The 80 acres they had at Hawley was near Pelican Lake; 40 acres on a side hill and 40 acres mostly under water. They headed north for St. Hilaire. It took them nine days for the trip of 90 miles.

They had not gone far when they discovered the wagon was falling apart. As it was a dry summer, the steel tires on the wagon became loose and fell off. So Grandpa found some hardwood and made shims and drove them between the tire and filley, and laid the wheels in beaver ditches that had water in.

By doing this, the wood expanded and the wheels got tight. This was an every night chore; two wheels a night. But he had no jack. So he made his first wagon jack. He located a nice spruce with about a six inch butt. He had some tools: axe, saw, and bits of different sizes for making pegging pins for logs when building log houses. The jack looked something like this:



The old couple settled on the N.E. 1/4 Section 30 and built their log cabin 12 x 14. With the help of their three sons, they cut, hewed and built the home in three days.

5. Homesteading

In the year 1883, Torkel Anfinson, still at Hawley, Minnesota, heard from his son Anfin that he was now moving to his second homestead. The whole family moved north and Ole, just being of age at 21 years, filed on his homestead: 2 1/2 S.W. 1/3 33, this being a nice quarter-section mostly small poplar and brush. He thought this could be easily opened for farming. But there was no timber suitable for a log shanty and no way to transport any, he decided on a sod shanty.

As he had walked across the prairie in Dakota the summer before looking for a good homestead, he saw a few sod shanties. And carefully examining them to see how they were built, he started searching for sod. But none to be found, so he cut peat in the driest part of the slough to about 12" x 18" cubes. He built his shanty and selecting a high knoll to build on, he then started to clear land around the shanty.

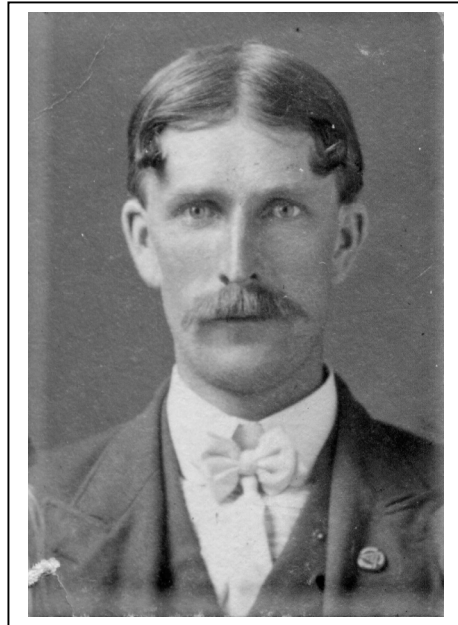
The following spring he tried to plant a few potatoes, which I guess was a problem according to what he said. There were so many rocks, big and small, that he got very little soil to cover the potatoes. So in the following year he got disgusted and sold his improvements to Mr. and Mrs. John Magnuson. He received \$5.00 cash and a personal note on Ole Braaten, which he never could collect. I can still remember the time the folks burned it.

Torkel's second choice was 80 acres in Six 29-80 in Section 32, which was mostly all timber. This was my birthplace, which I will tell you more about later. Torkel Anfinson settled on N.S. 1/4 S 30, where the old couple lived to a ripe old age of 84 and 86 years old.

6. *Uncle Toby*

Peder O. Stene and family arrived the same year from Janesville, Wisconsin. They also settled on this fraction on Section 19, now Smiley, next to the reservation border. His son Olaus, being just married, took 160 acres adjoining his folks. The three daughters, Caroline, Hannah, and Mathea, worked out in Wisconsin. Tobias, the youngest of the family, was home, where he took care of the elder parents until the time of their death. He lived on this farm until his death in 1941.

Tobias, being intelligent, went to school in Rocksbury Township when a school was built there in 1893. He had just 40 days of school, but always tried to learn all he could and picked up a lot on the side. I recall his handwriting, which was some of the best I have seen. When Smiley became a township in 1905, Tobias was elected town clerk. He was the first to record the books in the English language. He was later a school board member, Justice of the Peace, Assessor, etc. And being quite handy, he became the neighborhood butcher.

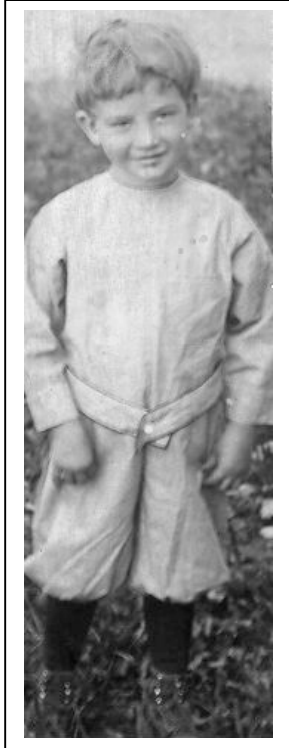


In the fall of the year, I recall him going from place to place, doing his hog butchering and also as a veterinarian. This was the one thing the neighbors called him for and also trouble with cows giving birth.

I spent many of my boyhood years hunting with him as he was one of the most intelligent sportsmen in those days in these parts. He hewed the logs and built the new home on their homestead at the age of 19. Part of this house still stands on the farm now called the Stene Place.

7. Bert

In the year 1889, Ole T. Anfinson and Mathea Stene were united in marriage, my mother and father. To them was born a family of nine: Sophia, Betsy, Theda, Pauline, Melvin (the writer), Ruth, Anton, Bert and Thelma. All were born on the homestead with the exception of Thelma, who was born in Thief River Falls.

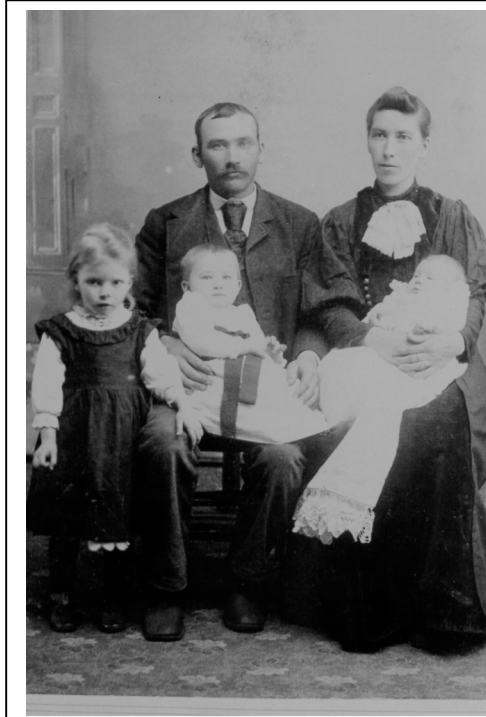


A sorrow to me and the whole community in 1926, was the death of my brother Bert. It came as the result of a fall from a tree. This was a shock to all, as I know of none who had as many friends as he. A swell guy.



8. *My Birthday*

In the year 1889, Ole Torkelson and Mathea Stene were united in marriage,



Ole and Mathea Torkelson with children:
Sophie, Bessie, and Tilda

which is my father and mother, and raised a family of nine children — namely, Sophia, Betsey, Tilda, Pauline, Melvin, Ruth, Anton, Bert and Thelma. All were born on the homestead except Thelma, who was born in Thief River Falls.

Then the year 1899, which was a hot, dry summer and pastures were poor. The few cows and young stock they had would break out as all the fencing they had was poplar poles nailed to posts and trees. And this particular day, September 6, was “my Birthday”. I will try to explain it as it was told to me.

Mother woke up that morning at the break of day and went to look for the cattle, but everything was quiet. No cow

bells ringing (they had bells on two or three of the oldest cows) and Dad was working in St. Hilaire at the saw mill. She had the four daughters at this time — Sophia, Betsey, Tilda, and Pauline.

She gave them orders not to go outside as she would soon be back. So she started tracking the cows (they would always head for the reservation 3/4 of a mile away through timber, swamps, and burnouts), but with no luck, she knew. She was now on the reservation. She became tired and sat on a windfall to rest when she felt pains and recognized them as labor pains as this was her fifth child to be born.

She thought of the four little kids at home alone and one more to be born. She prayed for help, but none came. She knew she had to rely on herself and the good Lord. She started back home again. Pains were more often and more severe. But a strong woman she was. She made it home and found the girls and things okay.

She asked two of the girls to run over to her sister Caroline Everson, who then was a widow who lived a half-mile away, to come and help out. But she got there too late. I was already born.

Mother was in bad shape. They didn't know if she would make it or not. Then late that night, Dad came home from work and told of the news that Mrs. Selma Thompson⁸ living in St. Hilaire had the yellow jaundice. She was our cousin, Selma Anfinson. She died a few days later from yellow jaundice.



Ruth, Tilda by log cabin where most of Mathea's children were born

Then they decided that was what Mother had too, as her finger nails and the whites of her eyes turned yellow. They were sure I had it, too, as I refused to nurse her breast and no nipples or bottles in those days. They had the answer to this, too. By soaking bread in milk with a little sugar added and put in a small cheese cloth bag, they stuck that in my mouth. There was no doctor nearer than Crookston and he wouldn't go out unless you had a good fast team. And the livery stable would go only where there was roads and we had neither.

All the good neighbors came to help the following days, but poor Mother was getting weaker, if anything. They decided that perhaps if she could get some of Dr. Peter's Kuriko, she might survive.⁹

⁸ There is a Mrs. Selma Thompson living in Rocksbury Township in the 1900 Census. Born in February 1882, she was married to Mr. Thompson (whose first name is illegible), aged 26. They had one child, a daughter, named Elma Clifford Thompson, born in September 1899.

⁹ Dr. Peter's Kuriko was made by the Fahrney Company of Chicago. It was referenced in *United States v. Six Dozen Bottles* as an example of "misbranding." By the 1890s, there were a number of

So Dad hit the trail on a dogtrot or jog. He thought if he could make it to St. Hilaire by daybreak, he could make it home by the next night, which he did. No Kuriko in St. Hilaire, so he jogged for Crookston as they had some kind of a drugstore there.¹⁰

During all this time, Thorval Hendrickson, our cousin, found Mother's cows about four miles in on the reservation. Then Thorval and Dad went to St. Hilaire and bought their first barb-wire. All the oxen could haul was four spools plus a 50 pound sack of flour. They had to carry the wire one spool at a time across the Gilbertson Swamp which was just west of where Hazel was, or is.

All through it all, the neighbors came here to visit with Mother. They had little faith in seeing her alive again. But Mother was a strong woman and had faith in God and also the Kuriko. She commenced to gain strength and raised 4 more children, namely Anton, Bert, Ruth and Thelma. She died on the homestead forty years later at the age of 75 years. Father died eight years later at the age of 84. God bless their memory.

As for me, I guess I must have done all right, too. According to what Mother said, "You ate anything they gave you." She said I went for solid food before I was able to sit up.

Dr. Fahrney's remedies in existence: Kuriko, a health restorer, lightning pain knocker, peerless liniment, and worm syrup.

¹⁰ St. Hilaire is nearly six miles from the Torkelson farm and Crookston is approximately forty miles from the farm.

9. Other Settlers in the Area

Now for the names of the settlers on the fraction in the beginning. Going south, N.W.S.18 John Kvall, Enoch Nelson. Also in 18, Tobias Stene, Knut Jorstad, H. J. Hostvet, Olaus Stene. S.19 Also in S.19, John A. Dahl, Alick Freeman Peterson.

Old Freeman, as he was called, had the misfortune of a fire destroying his shanty. But this didn't stop the old Swede. He moved to a corner stall in his barn, with the two horses and a few head of cattle and chickens. The chickens roosting on a big log just over his quarters. And one morning as he was making his breakfast, the old speckled rooster let out a big hunk of dropping and it landed kerpop on his pancake. That sort of upset the old man, and him telling it in the Swedish language: "*Tupp Kraaken Sheet paa Pan Kaken.*"

And one cold January day a couple of winters later, as Tobias Stene was on his way to visit our home place, he found him (Old Freeman) on a hill south of the Stene place with both hands and feet frozen. He was given First Aid at Stene's and later taken to Crookston to a rooming house used for a hospital. He died a short time later.

The only kin Old Freeman had was a cousin called Whiskey Alick, who had a 40 acre homestead adjoining Freeman to the east. He was found lying on his bunk, dead, and his empty jug on the floor. He was found by Anfin Torkelson as he was on his way from his homestead to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Torkel Anfinson.

Halvor J. Hostvet, Ludvig Anderson, W. D. Rigerts, Torkel Anfinson, Anfin Torkelson all in Section 19. Old Hestekind, Andrew Hestekind, Martin Lokken, Peder Olson, Orrin Arveson, Halvor O. Wiken, Ole T. Anfinson¹¹, G. O. Gustafson, and Kari Braaten now Section 29 and 30.

¹¹ Ole T. Anfinson would change his name to Ole Torkelson, Melvin's father.

10. *A Schoolhouse is Built*

The south border of the Fraction was soon settled. Hans Fredrickson, Tollof Erickson Skredergaaden, Kari Braaten, Gilbert Anfinson, Ellen T. Anfinson, Peter Thune, and Ole T. Anfinson. Then it was to organize and build a school house. They bought a one acre plot in Section 31 from Kari Braaten, which centered the Fraction best. The south border of the Fraction was mostly 80 acre and 40 acre lots, where settled Andrew Hestekind, Martin Lokken, Martha Nelson, Gilbert Sherva, P[eter] Thune, Ole and Jorgen Larson, Christ Christenson.

At this time, settlers were coming into this last frontier by the dozens. Such men



Ole Thune on the school outhouse

as John A. Dahl, his homestead being in Section 21 where Everett Jasmer now lives. John Dahl, having the largest family in these parts (later totaling 14 children), started organizing a school district with the help of the other settlers. As it went over in a big way, he purchased a lot from Ole and Kari Braaten on which to build the school.

The school consisted of one room. Anfin and Ole Torkelson got the job of doing the building (nowadays, we call it “constructing”). Logs, of course. The other members cut and hauled the logs and these two great craftsmen from Norway hewed the logs, built the house windows, floors, doors, and “what you know”. It even had a board floor and a brick chimney, which was very uncommon in those days.

Right adjoining John Dahl was his brother, Ludwig Anderson (two brothers with a different name again). Then a few winters later, his yoke of oxen came home from St. Hilaire late in the night with him dragging underneath the sleigh bunk by the rope lines; dead, of course. No inquest was held. It could have been murder, but those days a dead man — Well, he was just a DEAD MAN.

11. Old Freeman and Whiskey Alick

St. Hilaire, now being a booming village boasting two saloons and a larger saw mill, was where most of these settlers worked during the summers to get a little money for winter supplies such as flour, coffee, sugar and tobacco.

Also in Section 21 was Alexander Freeman, a Swede. He was also the first man to own a team of horses in these parts. They had their hard luck those days, too, as his shanty burned. So he moved to a stall in his log barn with his horses, cattle and a few chickens. The only thing the old fellow complained about was his chickens roosting on a big log just over his apartment. One morning as he was making pancakes the old speckled rooster let his “droppings” fall on his pancakes. His telling this in the Swedish language sounded something like this: *“Lupp Kraaken Sheet paa Pan Kaken”*.

Old Freeman took ill one winter in the 1908 or 10’s and apparently was trying to make the Stene Place. He was found by Tobias Stene with both hands and feet frozen. He died in a rooming house in Crookston a few days later. Also next to Freeman’s homestead was old Whiskey Alick, who was found dead in his bunk with the empty jug on the floor.

Then when more old timers such as Hans Frederickson, Tollof Erickson, John Olson, Simon Olson and Aaren Arveson, who in 1900 sold to Halvor Wiken and moved to Neptune, finally complete this last frontier.

Such fine people as Otto and Ida Gustafson, who had a family and lived in Rocksbury Township. They had three children: Hildur and Gust born in Rocksbury and Esther born on the homestead. All of them being my schoolmates. Otto was a brother of Charles Gustafson, now C. Gustafson & Son, Inc. Otto, also being a carpenter by trade, helped the community a lot.

Peter and Gro Thune bought the John Olson claim and Peter and Martha Nelson bought the Magnuson place (my father’s first homestead, the “rock pile” which I mentioned earlier in the story). Peter Nelson had one son, Edwin. Edwin still resides on the same place.

12. Peace Treaty

Then to the southwest (now River Falls Township) when the Magnusons settled again, was Ole Peterson and Jim Gilbertson. I have been told of an incident of serious happening on this. Jim Gilbertson and Tollef Erickson were going out into the reservation one day to get a load of logs. With good success, they found a nice patch and turned to load, cut, and load. There was a slight rustle in the bush and out popped an Indian. And approaching old Jim, wanted something in exchange for the wood.

Since neither understood one another and Jim having no money, he thought of a new jack-knife he had just bought. Using his quick action as he always had, he pulled out the knife and presented it to the Indian. The Indian in a flash of time pulled out a foot long dagger and pointed it to Jim's chest.

Finally after a little hand talk, I guess they must have agreed as the Indian got the jack-knife and the white man could get all the logs he needed. An odd, but true, Peace Treaty. But Tollof seeing this, laid down on his load and prodded his oxen with a stick — homeward bound! Jim always boasted how he could deal with the Indians and we must all agree he did a fine job.

13. Winter of the Blue Snow

This may sound easy, but these early settlers had their troubles, too. I have been told time and again of the winter of 1890 called the “winter of the blue snow”. It was so cold that the snow actually looked blue and the snow was estimated to be 8 feet on the level.

My father told of his experience to get wood for the shanty. He used skis to walk on and stood on them as he cut the trees flush with the snow and carried them home on his back. The following spring when the snow melted, he measured the length of the stumps and they were 9 to 10 feet tall!

The snow must have been pretty high as the shanties and stables were all buried in the snow. They had to shovel steps to go up and down and the stables were so warm and stuffy they had to leave the door open even on the coldest days. The water system was melting snow and carrying it on skis for cattle and house use. Whenever they went to visit the settlers, they could ski until they saw smoke coming out of the snow, and that was some settler’s shanty.

14. *Devil's Moose Fly*

And in the summers they had the mosquitoes to contend with. They often got so bad that smudges would not control them. They had to keep their livestock in the barn and cut grass for them with the scythe. And horse flies, or “moose flies” as they were often called, but the Scandinavians mostly called them *Din Djevla-Kligen* which interprets to the “Devil’s Moose Fly”.

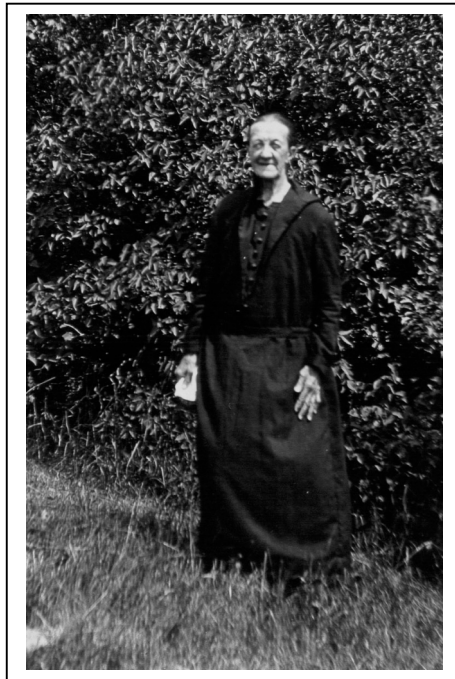
I recall them settling on a cow’s teats so thick you couldn’t see skin at all. My mother used to put old rancid lard on to keep them off, which also helped to keep the cow from kicking the _____? of a full moon, as the milking was customarily done in a cow pen next to the stable in the summer. And wherever these pioneers were to go, it meant to take your feet and walk.

And water in all the sloughs and no roads built. They had their own simple, but shrewd, means. They wore old shoes with holes in them so the water could run out when they got on higher ground. The women, well, they carried their skirts above water hip high, shoulder high and often even higher. I know this to be true as I saw it with my own eyes.

15. *Hjor-Mor*

The women did their share of the work those days, too. They carded and spun the wool as almost everyone had a few sheep. They knit all the socks, mitts, caps and shawls for the whole family, and still took a few pair to town and sold them.

They were also fortunate in having such women as Kari Braaten who was the country's midwife. Called *Hjor-Mor*. She also was quite a quack doctor and nurse. She received all the kids that were born in the whole neighborhood until 1908 when they moved to North Dakota when the Burthold Indian Reservation west of Minot opened for homestead. They returned here again in 1911, broke but not discouraged. She continued her doctor-practicing again. Death came to her in 1927 at an age of 87.



16. Expansion

By the year 1900, practically all the land in this community was pretty well picked over. Some were some lots of 40 acres and one full 160 acres. The settlers carried on the best they could, always ready to help one another in time of need.

The only railroad service they had was a branch line from Crookston to St. Hilaire with trains running two days a week. St. Hilaire being quite a place by now, as almost all the settlers were working there through the summer months at the saw mill.

I recall my father coming home every Saturday and walking back again early Monday morning. He built a pasture fence every Sunday, I think; it was only poplar rails to use. I recall the cows breaking out real often and they always would head for the Indian reservation, less than a mile away. Often there were two or three days before Mother could find them.

Then there came news throughout the neighborhood that the Great Northern, or "Jim Hill's line"¹² as it was mostly called, was going to build a railroad from St. Hilaire to Thief River Falls. And — the Soo Line might come through here somewhere. Then in the years 1904-5, the Great Northern built to Thief River Falls and the Soo Line from St. Paul to Thief River Falls and later to Winnipeg, Canada.

Then, the opening of a part of the Red Lake Indian Reservation. Things really started to boom. Plenty of work for everyone with new settlers coming from all over the southern part of the state. In order to open this last frontier, this portion of the reservation was called "homestead". But far from it! All good portions of land were bid on through land agents acting for the government. The lowest was \$4.00 per acre and up to \$27.00. They then would purchase the

¹² James J. Hill (1838-1916) was one of the wealthiest and most powerful figures of America's Gilded Age. He worked relentlessly to push his railroad line north from St. Paul to Canada and west across the Rocky Mountains. A quote attributed to him is: "Give me snuff, whiskey and Swedes, and I will build a railroad to hell."

title from the state. The banks at the time would loan money to pay for this land, and those that did make such a loan, very few of them could even pay it back, so most of them lost the land and all their hard work and hardships.

This being a great boost for Thief River Falls created business to expand. More banks, a creamery store such as Oen's big brick corner building, churches, schools, and a saw mill which caused St. Hilaire to discontinue theirs. And — we must not forget the dozen or more saloons there. Seventeen, to be correct.

And the Indians now being all moved to their part of the reservation demanded their dead be moved from their burying ground at Squaw Point to Red Lake Agency. The contract to move them was let at St. Paul. And Babtist LaBree, a big wheel in T.R.F. at that time, got an order to sublet this job. So old Johanas DuChamp took the job at \$15.00 a head. He was a rugged man, well built for the job, but he had to have an interpreter and asked Babtist to go with him. But Babtist told him to take Jessie, the kid, as he could talk better Indian language than he. Jessie, being a quarter-breed Indian, was well suited for this job.

The Soo Line now built a main line, Glenwood to Thief River Falls, and new towns sprung up along the line such as Hazel and Plummer, both to the south; Steiner, Holt, Middle River to the north. But that was just a small part of them. All throughout the old reservation now were post offices and stores and trading posts. Kratka and Highlanding (which got that name in the early steamboat days on the Red Lake River, as that was the first high and dry banks where the boats could load and unload passengers and mail); then there was Sunbeam, with a post office and store, also a newspaper press called the Eleven Towns.

Rhoda and Neptune border the new reservation boundary, opened and operated by John Mostrum. Neptune was a hot spot those days and others like the Anton Post Office, which was just across the river from the Smiley Bridge. Germantown, Mavie, Goodridge, Espele, Grygla, Cornell, Malcolm, and Strip. I recall the first mail route out of Hazel to Rhoda. The next route took on from there to the eastern part and to Neptune. So, you can see the mail was transferred a lot more those days.

17. *“Everybody POLKA!”*

Hazel then began to expand. It had just the one store and post office, built and run by Mr. and Mrs. Edstrum. They sold later to Ole Peterson who sold the land to the railroad company for the town site. His co-partner was son-in-law Ole Odegard and Paul Borgie. This building is the Hazel Mercantile, which still stands today.

Then Mr. and Mrs. John F. Magnuson, who owned a quarter-section to the west



of Hazel, built the next store — a two-story structure with a general merchandise store on the first floor and a dance hall upstairs, with a lean-to on the back for living quarters. The entrance to the roof of the lean-to was planks held on by cleats on the roof to the dance hall. All the drunks and fights there were on this roof and no casualties!!

There never was a dance or social held there without a fight or two, sometimes more. Just a fad, I guess. But Mrs. Olina Magnuson (Olina, she was mostly called) kept order in the dance hall. SHE was the bouncer! When she wasn't down in the kitchen drinking hot alcohol punch with her friends, mostly men, she smoked a pipe, and — I mean smoked!

I recall one night when I was there (I was just a punk kid, but you know how that goes), I went to one of the neighbors early in the evening, and as they all

went, I could go, too. Well, this time there was quite a ruckus upstairs. Fights and women screaming. And Olina, being in the kitchen with her gang, comes up the ramp two steps at the time with quite a few hot alkies under her belt.

On the middle of the floor was a big bully from Thief River. Of course, he paid no heed to a woman, and cursed and sassed her. She marched up and landed a right uppercut to the jaw, grabbed the big hunk by the collar of his coat, and dragged him through the hall and over the roughramp on the roof to the stairs, gave him a flip, and down the stairs over and over he went. She then brushed her hands together, and came back in the hall yelling, "Everybody POLKA!!"

But as for John, it was worse. When they came to dancing polkas, which was the most popular dance those days, the building vibrated so much that the shoe boxes fell out of their shelves and the prune boxes tipped. He would stand on the middle of the floor with his red whiskers sticking straight out, and yell and swear at Olina and everyone else. So, he remedied it some by putting two rows of posts down the middle of the building. Yeah, this couple really got Hazel off to a booming little town.

One year, shortly before Christmas, Olina went to visit her half-brother Pete Lund, later known as H. P. Lund at Neptune. She asked Ole Lian to be her chauffeur, as her being a business women from Hazel had to travel in style. They had a good driving team, a light bob-sleigh, and were well supplied — two charcoal foot warmers, covered themselves with dogskin coats and a horsehide robe.

She also showed the Neptune people a "Merry Christmas" — two gallons of alcohol and one of whiskey, three new pipes, ten pounds of smoking tobacco, four new decks of cards, 300 pennies for penny ante, and a twenty-five pound pail of Christmas candy for the kids.

A few years later Hazel became too tame for the old couple, so they sold out and moved to Saskatchewan, Canada, and started a new store in the Canadian wilderness. In 1917, they returned again to the U. S. A.

18. *Hazel*

Hazel then began to expand. Ole Matson built a store there. A few years later he was stricken with some unknown sickness and paralyzed from the hips down. He never walked again, but, willing to support himself, he bought the old Ole Vigen homestead which was now too close to the Soo Line Railroad for comfort, and moved it to his dad's farm and started a grocery store. He later started one more store in St. Hilaire.

There are still a few people living here that can remember him with his old horse and Democrat wagon,¹³ making his several routes through the neighborhood, peddling groceries and taking eggs, hides, furs, etc. in trade. He received very little in cash sales, but some credit.

Then the Hazel community, due to the thickly settled community and the opening of the reservation which was not being settled, all had a few cows (the only source of living) and organized the Farmer's Co-op Cheese Factory.

But they never did make any cheese. They churned butter in place and that put the old cream weighing station out of business, which was a blessing to the farmers, as the cream was weighed here and hauled to the creamery at St. Hilaire. Tuesdays and Fridays of each week, the patrons took turns at hauling to St. Hilaire in huge twenty-five gallon wood drums with a metal drum inside with a handle on the middle of each side for handling, and a two inch leather strap over the cover to hold it down. In the hot summer when the cream got too sour and warm, it would boil over and through the cover.

Then the Soo Hotel was built by two sisters, Gena and Tillie Hestekind. Gena, now Mrs. Pete Nelson, is still living in the same place. Also Sumpter's Livery Barn, a Citizen's State Bank, Hanson and Barzen Grain Elevator, blacksmith shop, lumber yard, a school house, and the Hazel Farmer's Club built a new dance hall.

¹³ An open, light-weight, horse-drawn, flat bed wagon.



19. The Magnusons

1. John F. and Olina Magnuson's First store and dance hall (Woo-Pee). Built in 1904. Erased 1939. John F. Magnuson and his wife, Olina, planned and built this building in 1905. Grocery store on first floor and dance hall on second floor called the Woo-Pee or Long Branch. The living quarters were in back.

They also had the U.S. Post Office in Hazel and the St. Hilaire mail route came through Hazel until Route 3, Thief River Falls was organized in 1915 with a run east from Hazel 5 miles and north to the river and northwest to Thief River Falls.

These were the days of the beginnings of the greatest post card fad in America (postage \$.01) and Olina the Postmaster would censor them all to keep up with the gossip. So, if you wanted to know the latest, you could get it from Olina. All mail order catalogs were ads for Post Cards. Some cost \$.05 each, while others as low as 100 for \$.025.

This looked like a waste of money. Most of the correspondence was the same, like:

"Thank you for the nice post card. I owe you this one.
Goodbye. A————."

"Hello C————. I am fine, how are you?
I am sending you this card because I like you.
From a friend."

"Dear friend, Papa drove the oxen to Teef River Falls today.
No, I must go now and trow muck out of the stable.
Your friend."

Now back to Magnusons again. There were very few Saturday evenings there wasn't a dance or basket social upstairs at *Magnusa*, as it was commonly called, as there was a large population of young folks and teens at this time. So if there was anyone that needed help, Olin would spread the word of a basket social and dance.

I recall a few instances where someone would have to have an appendix operation and *Magnusa* would collect about \$100.00 or more for the operation which was at the Bratrud Hospital at Warren, Minnesota. I guess that was the set sum, and of course, the \$2. 00 to the fiddler and someone to pound the organ.

And that was just the beginning of activities. The St. Pauli congregation had just organized and built the St. Pauli church one mile north of Hazel. And the Ladies Aid also going strong. These women were hustlers. They knit sweaters, scarves, mitts, socks, etc. from wool they carded and spun in their home. Also aprons and children's dresses.

And they held auction sales in the late fall. But where could they find a place suitable for to handle a gathering like this? So *Magnusa* came to the rescue again. She donated the hall free to the Ladies Aid. And their auction always was a great success.

And after the auction was over, a big free supper was given by the Aid. And after all this stuff was cleared out of the way, the pastor and most of the older people and small children had gone home. Someone got the brooms and gave the floor the once-over . They had a free dance until morning. Most everyone tried to make it home before daylight. So no one could see what hour they came home.

In 1912 the Magnusons sold their inventory and the building to Ole Peterson and moved to Shanovan, Saskatchewan, Canada, and started a store there. But in 1918 the couple moved back to Hazel and bought 40 acres from Martin Lokken, one mile north of Hazel , and lived there until their health failed. They passed on in the 1920's.

2. Hazel Mercantile was built in 1904 by Mr. and Mrs. John Edstrom. Sold 1908 to Ole Pederson who later took his son-in-law Ole Odegaard and Paul

Borgie as partners. Ole Odegaard soon became sole owner and operator.
No comments.

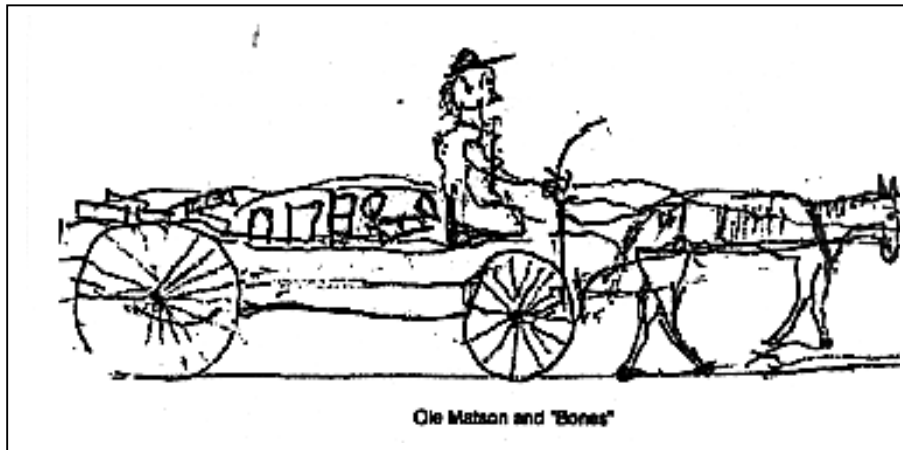
3. Soo Line Depot was also built in 1904. And in 1936 was moved to Strandquist. You may find it there.
4. Section house was also built in 1904 or 5 for the section foreman to live in.
5. This was built in 1910 as the Farmers Co-op Creamery Company. Discontinued operation in the 1930's.
6. Hanson Barzen Elevator was also built in 1910 and moved in 1943 to St. Hilaire by way of Thief River Falls due to overhead bridges on the Red Lake River to St. Hilaire. Still in use there.

20. Ole Matson and Bones

7. Ole Matson's Store built 1908 and destroyed by fire in 1920's. Rebuilt again the same year. Ole Matson, an uncle of Clayton Matson, he became paralyzed from the hips down and spent the last 26 years of his life in a wheel chair.

But that did not stop him. He was the founder of the first chain stores on record (he even beat J. C. Penney). Store No. 1 was on his farm, one mile north of Hazel. No. 2 store was in St. Hilaire and Store No. 3 at Hazel.

In the summer, he also ran grocery routes throughout the country, mostly around Hazel. He used a Democrat buggy and one old horse named Bones.



Martin Mathson, Ole's brother, was located in Washington State, and he came home when he heard of Ole's condition, to take over the farm and care for the aged father, Krist. Ole managed the store on the farm with the use of a wheel chair. But he was kind at heart, and credit almost broke him.

I can recall one instance. One of his good customers had a hen setting on a mess of eggs. And she somehow got killed and the eggs soon to be hatched.

So the thankful lady said, “Oh, well, Ole Matson will soon be coming around and we can trade them to him on groceries.”

But Ole was a good businessman. After candling¹⁴ the eggs, he marked them, and the next time he took them to the lady. But he lost both the groceries and the customer.

But handicapped as he was, he sure showed the people what can be done if you try. Not only to care for himself, he hired and kept 2-3 families besides. He had a family running the store and business at Hazel: the Ed Knutson family and his sis, Tillie, and Charles Oldige. And the St. Hilaire store was run by Ed Peterson and family. So, you see Ole had his problems, too.

He had one close call. While on the grocery route, he was coming west for home. He passed the St. Pauli church when he saw a bad storm coming from the west. He coaxed Bones all he could, but when he got to the Soo Line track, the storm hit. Hail storm, it was. Hail as large as baseballs and Bones no longer needed coaching. They hit the ditch.

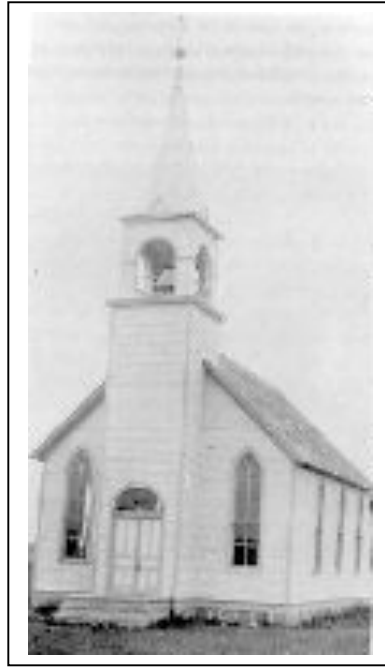
That broke the spaves or filleys and part of the harness. When Martin came to his rescue, Ole was lying on top of the sugar bags, with water-proof table cloth (called oilcloth, as that was what they used for tarps in those days) over most of the load and himself. Martin said he never thought Old Bones could run that fast.

¹⁴ Eggs are candled to determine their condition and detect any spots of blood or meat. It is generally done in a darkened room with the egg held before a light, which penetrates the egg and makes it possible to observe the inside.

21. *St. Pauli*

The St. Pauli Congregation, who organized and built the present St. Pauli Church some time in the early 1900's, was well represented. People walked and some drove teams for miles around to attend worship services. Ladies' Aid, Sunday School and Young People's Society, which was often held in the home on Sunday afternoon, which I can recall the young girls of this day suffered the worst.

A lot of them had to walk to get there. Some were fortunate enough to ride on a wagon or buggy, and they all had to dress their best in white skirts or light colored dresses, which didn't look too good when they got there, as there was only short stretches of road. The rest of the way was to circle around slough¹⁵ holes in tall grass and willow brush and follow the wagon tracks. By doing so, there was axle grease from the wagons and buggies. There! So you can see what their dresses looked like, unless they carried them awful high, and then their stockings would get it!



And the wagons and buggies were well kept with grease and cared for by putting them in the shed and shade. Far more than the automobile of today. When you purchased a buggy, you got a new whip, a buggy wrench, and a two pound can of axle grease.

The buggy brought one more subject which I well recall. The general stores those days had the whip rack hanging from the ceiling, a round hoop hanging by three chains with a swivel in the top, a notch to hold the sash in place, and

¹⁵ Pronounced "slew," this is a swampy section of land. In the northern Great Plains, it is often an alkaline pond that is a result of glaciation and is sometimes called a prairie pothole.

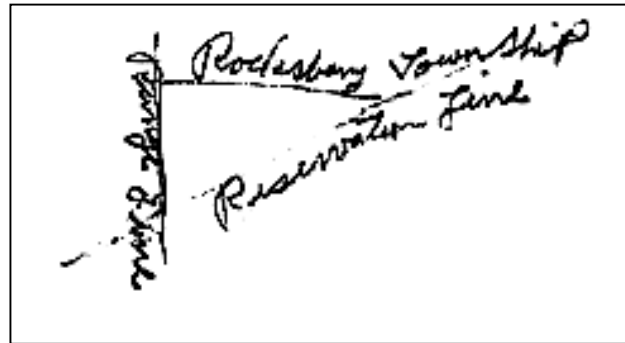
priced from \$.25 to \$2 .00 for the braided rawhide ones. Also the old pot-bellied stove and the hand-turned coffee grinder. The big balance scale with weights from 1 pound to 100 pounds.

In the summer these stores were well cluttered with articles such as straw hats for men, bonnets for women, and fly nets for the horses. In the fall and winter, the display was cloth or shoes. Rubbers with or without leather tops. Leggings for men, women and children, felt boots, moccasins, mitts, caps, such as the all-wool quilted crocheted cap.

22. Polk County Divided

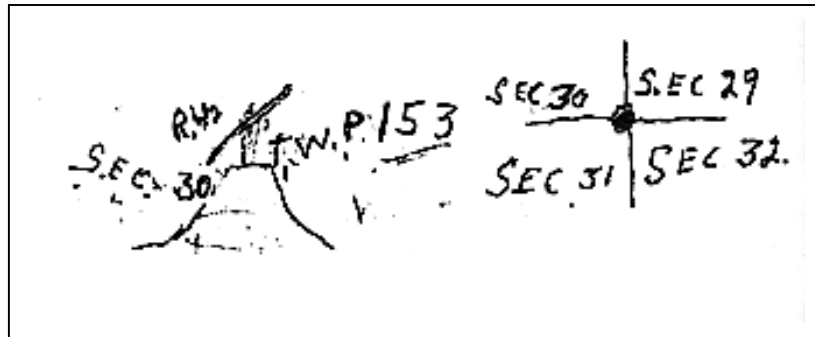
In the year 1896, Polk County was divided and this then became Red Lake County with the county seat being at Red Lake Falls and whose present courthouse was built. The Pennington County tax payers just paid their last bond on this in 1955, a year before we started building our second one here in Pennington County. Odd, is it not?

In the year 1896, just 80 short years gone by the year, Polk and Red Lake Counties were divided. And Red Lake Falls became the county seat of Red Lake County and Crookston remained the county seat of Polk County. A portion of land, a triangle along the Red Lake Indian Reservation containing approximately 4,500 acres which had been surveyed 12 years earlier and mostly sold, which is now a part of Smiley Township. This portion of land was then known as the fraction. Like this:



All records and taxes went through Rocksbury Township. And that is the reason why records of the Fraction are so hard to locate, such as birth records, death records, and tax monies. And roads there were none except Indian trails and a few wagon trails along the boundaries. And the government survey mounds and stakes were still in their place.

It is like the old saying of Chief Joseph:¹⁶ “White man make roost for eagle, but Eagle fly high.” I have seen some of the mounds and stakes myself when I was young, with a faded lath nailed to them stating the section and range and township. Something like this:



¹⁶ Chief Joseph (1840-1904) was a Nez Perce chief, famous for his resistance to their removal to a reservation in Idaho. In 1877 he and the tribe formally surrendered in Montana, less than forty miles from their intended escape in Canada. It is here where he gave his famous speech that included the words: “From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.”

23. Post Offices

By the end of 1905, most of the Reservation was settled with the exception of a few plots which were mostly swamp. That made Thief River Falls the most favorable spot for a trade center, as there were two railroad lines crossing there and a good chance for branch lines, which by the year 1909 the Soo Line built the so-called “Wheat Line” from Thief River to Kenmore, North Dakota. And the Great Northern extended their line to International Falls.

Then there was a need for post offices throughout the area. Most of them included a store and blacksmith shop, some had livery and feed barn. In a short time there were quite a few such as Anton Post Office in Smiley, just across the river from the now Smiley Hall; Kratka Post Office, store, blacksmith shop and creamery; Bronksberg Post Office, both in Kratka Township.

In Highland Township was Highland with a post office, two stores, a dance hall, livery barn and blacksmith shop. Highland got that name in the early boat days on the river as that was the only “high landing” for the boats to put out their planks in a very wet season.

Erie Post Office store, blacksmith, Kunnell Post Office, and Sunbeam Post Office store and a printing press published a newspaper called The Eleven Towns. Torgerson Post Office in Reiner Township and Malone Post Office in Mayfield Township. Deer Park Township with three—Radney Post Office, Roland Post Office store and blacksmith machine shop, O. K. Rolandson, Propr., and Rhoda Post Office, being the first place to have barn dances in the county.

Hickory Township to the far southeast corner with Hilda Post Office and Neptune Post Office store, blacksmith and dance hall, owned and run by the late John Mostrum. To the north in Marshall Township, several post offices were established by now such as Rosewood, Mavie, Germantown, Espele, Thorholt, Grygla, Cornell, Malcolm and Strip. There was a post office on the Rapid River without a name.

And to the south now in Red Lake County was Lillo Post Office, Lambert Post Office, and Wamke Post Office store, built and operated by Edwin Wamke who just passed away December 12, 1961 at the age of 94. He probably was the last one of the old pioneers.

24. Ditch Dredging and Log Drives

By 1908 A. J. Arpon, which was called the North Drainage Company, came here from the East and started building dredges, which were the beginning of the drag-line of today. The first dredging machine consisted of a powered steam engine, which used wood to fire the boiler. Later they used a one-cylinder gas engine with a piston bore of 16" with a 50-70 foot boom. Its length was economical and a width of 60-100 feet.

They had living quarters, sleeping quarters, and a blacksmith and supply shop. There were no gears to shi or to be worn out. The mechanism was simple, but sturdy. It consisted of huge logs hewed smooth with a hardwood boxing in each end. "Thimbles" they were called.

With heavy chains made from 1" steel. Each link about 6" long. These chains were pinned and wrapped around these "thimbles", and when turned by the engine, would draw the shovel up and down. And one would swing the boom and the other one to move the walkers. It had four feet called "walkers"; two in front and two in the rear. They were built from big timbers and planks approximately 6' wide and 16' long. This made it far enough apart to straddle the ditches. When it walked, the front feet were drawn forward to its full length and the rear was then to follow the same course. When the water got too deep, they rebuilt them to a floating dredge. I have watched them both in operation.

By 1914 there were several county ditches, mostly east and west, draining the water into the Red Lake River. The dirt dumps were leveled somewhat to make the roads.

And the log drive on the river, I should have told you before. This was started in the early 1880's, when St. Hilaire and Crookston built their first saw mills, with timber cut across the east side of Red Lake, the landing on the Tamarac River, which now is Washkish. As soon as the ice left the lake and river, the logs were boomed together. By doing this, they chained some of the largest logs together and circled the boom, which kept it in one package, and towed it across the lake with a steamboat to the outlets, and started the logs down the river.

It took from six to ten weeks for the first logs to come to Thief River Falls, and when Thief River established their saw mill, the logs were all stamped in the ends. "T.R.L.Co." for Thief River, "S.T.L.Co." for St. Hilaire, and "C.L.Co." for Crookston. I used to enjoy standing at the dam in Thief River Falls and watch them sort the logs and see the St. Hilaire and Crookston logs go over the dam. They would dive to the bottom and come up several hundred feet down the river. They seemed like they were alive and just set free again.

25. *“And a Proud Boy I Was”*

By 1910 Thief River Falls had to expand to accommodate this tremendous trade area, and that year is when Red Lake County was divided and Thief River became the county seat for Pennington County. They rebuilt the City Fire Hall for a courthouse, with offices on the first floor and courtroom upstairs, which answered this person until 1956.

The city also built the first auditorium in 1910, which was erased by fire in 1936, and rebuilt the present one in 1937. Thief River now had three bridges across the Red Lake and Thief Rivers. A steel arch bridge on First Street (where the present First Street bridge is now located) and the Squaw Point Bridge on Highway 1, which was replaced with the present one in 1956. Also Long's Bridge, which remains the same. The Great Northern had a bridge just above the dam to contact the saw mill, which was across the river on First Street from the now Northwestern Hospital.

Population was increasing rapidly, and so three schoolhouses were built. The Central on Horace Avenue and Third Street North, Knox on its same location and part of it still is the old building, and the first Washington (Lincoln) High School.

The sawmill was still doing good business and it employed from 125-140 people, bringing new residents at a fast pace. Several new churches, but no hospital until 1917 when Doctors Swedenberg and Bower built the small one yet standing on Knight Avenue and Third Street.

Oh, yes, they had the saloons, too. Such places as the Eagle's Nest, You and I, Morgan's Place, Pat's Place, First Chance, and also Last Chance, which was on Bridge Street. It had a big sign as you entered town reading "First Chance" on one side and on the other side it read "Last Chance."

Then there were hotels. Such as the Soo Cafe on Third Street, the Park Hotel one block west from the Soo Depot, now presently occupied by the Farmer's Union Oil Company. Andrew Prestebak and Bros. were owners and operators.

There was also the Ogema, a large hotel for those days (where the Post Office presently stands), and the Evelyn Hotel (where the present Times Office is). Also livery and feed barns, sales barns — there were five of them in all.

In 1917 I drove for one of these myself and we must not forget the Haymarket, which it was called, as it was a half block away (where the Hartz Supermarket now stands). It was not unusual to see up to twenty loads of cordwood and pole wood, plus some hay loads on the market in one single day, drawn by horses and several yokes of oxen. This was one source of income for the farmers in the winter, as most of the people in town burned wood and there were several delivery teams in town as a lot of the residents had a driving team.

They even kept a cow or two for milk. Since Pete Englestad's Guernsey Dairy was the only person to deliver milk to Thief River, it was soon the free delivery of milk by the stores and meat markets, such stores as, Oen's Mercantile, Farmer's Co-op Store, Sandom and Nelson Meat Markets, which I delivered for myself in 1916 and a proud boy I was with such a reliable job.

They had a one horse cart with a grocery box in the center, with a cover and a running board in the back. It had a round stool if you preferred to sit. I thought the day would never come when they could improve or equal this great invention.

Postlogue

*Portions of a story written by Melvin for Pennington County History,
published by the Pennington County Historical Society in 1976.*

Melvin stayed at home until he was confirmed at the age of fifteen and then he went to North Dakota to work in the harvest fields. He also spent a few winters in lumber camps in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In 1931, he married the girl next door, Helen Wiken, whose parents had homesteaded only a half-mile from his parents.

Getting married during the depression was often a touch-and-go situation, but he cut wood with a sleigh-mounted saw operated by a Model T engine to sell in Thief River Falls at \$3.00 a cord. He also sawed wood for neighbors. If it hadn't been for the saw and the people in Thief River Falls, they would have had a very hard time. At the low part of the Depression, he recalls butterfat was \$.09 a pound, eggs were \$.08 a dozen in trade for groceries. Gasoline on special was five gallons for a dollar.

Melvin and Helen moved around the locality until they bought their present farm in 1943. They bought the Whiteway Inn which was located in what is now the Piggly Wiggly parking lot in Thief River Falls and moved it to the country to become their home. All of the children recall the rings in the linoleum in the living room, which were made by the grooves in the floor left by the barstools. The farm they had bought didn't have a well when they bought the Whiteway Inn, so they moved the house onto a piece of land owned by Melvin's parents.



In 1948 they had it moved to their farm with their oldest daughter, Geraldine, enjoying the entire trip from the comfort of the house. The house then stood on blocks until Melvin could build a foundation.

Selected Obituaries

Peder and Beret Stene Family

Peder Olson Stene (1837-1911)

Press, 26 May 1911

Peder O. Stene, who died May 11th at the home of his son, Tobias Stene, in the town of Smiley had been a resident in that place for the last 22 years. He was born in Norway in 1837 and was thus at the time of his death 74 years of age. The cause of his sudden death was heart failure. He was buried at the Greenwood Cemetery beside his wife who preceded him but a few months, having died at an advanced age on the 20th day of last February. This couple leaves to mourn them two sons and three daughters, namely: Mrs. A. Odegaard, O.P. Stene of Funkley, Mrs. Frank McPhee of Grand Forks, Mrs. O. T. Anfinson [Torkelson], and Tobias Stene of this vicinity. The departed were highly respected pioneers in their community.

Caroline Stene Iverson Odegaard (1861-1941)

St. Hilaire Spectator, 27 September 1941

Mrs. Caroline Odegaard, resident of this section and community for well over fifty years, died at her home in the village shortly before noon Tuesday after a long illness. Mrs. Odegaard, nee Caroline Stene, was born in Lillehammer, Norway the 17th of February, 1861 and was 80 years and 7 months of age at time of her demise.

She came to the United States in 1885 and was located for a short time in Wisconsin before coming to Thief River Falls where she was united in marriage to Halvor Iverson in 1887. Mr. Iverson preceded his wife in death many years ago, as also did a son and daughter. In 1909 she was united in marriage to Ander Odegaard who died in 1932. Since that time, she resided at her home in the village.

Mrs. Odegaard is survived by five sons, Iver in Rocksbury; Peter at Langdon, North Dakota; Lawrence in Texas; Ben and Casper of this village. She also is survived by a brother, Tobias Stene, or Smiley; and two sisters, Mrs. Ole Torkelson of Smiley and Mrs. Hannah McFee [sic] of Grand Forks, North Dakota; and by 19 grandchildren. Funeral services will be conducted Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock at the Larson funeral chapel at Thief River Falls with Rev. A. O. Skibsrud officiating. Interment will be at Greenwood cemetery at Thief River Falls where other members of her family are buried.

Olaus Pedersen (O.P.) Stene (1863-1938)

The Blackduck American, 21 December 1938

Pioneer Resident Died Sunday: Last Rites Held At Lutheran Church Today For O. P. Stene

O. P. Stene, old time resident of Horner township where he homesteaded before the founding of the village of Blackduck, died from pneumonia last Sunday afternoon following a short illness. He died at his old homestead where he was making his home with his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Lyder Peterson.

Olaus P. Stene was born in Norway, July 21, 1863 and at the time of his death had reached the age of 75 years, four months and 27 days. He came to the United States in 1899 and came directly to Minnesota and the Blackduck country. He had been a resident of here for 39 years.

He is survived by five daughters and three sons. They are Mrs. Gust Johnson, Mrs. Lyder Peterson, Mrs. Price Langord and Olga Stene of Blackduck, Mrs. Lena Johnson of Clearbrook, Clarence and Martin Stene of Blackduck and Roy Stene of Big Falls. He is also survived by a brother, Tobias Stene of Thief River Falls, and three sisters, Mrs. A. Odegaard of St. Hilaire, Mrs. Ole Torkelson of Thief River Falls, and Mrs.; Hanna McPhee of Grand Forks, North Dakota. His wife preceded him in death about five or six years ago.

Funeral services were held this (Wednesday) afternoon at the Zion Lutheran church with Rev. Clarence H. Johnson, officiating, and interment made in Lakeview cemetery.

Mathea Stene Torkelson (1869-1943)

Thief River Falls Times, December 1943

Mrs. Mathea Torkelson passed away at her home in Smiley township at 10:00 P.M. Wednesday, December 29, at the age of 74 years. Services were held from the St. Pauli Lutheran church near Hazel Monday with Rev. A. O. Skibsrud officiating, and interment was made at the Greenwood cemetery.

Mrs. Torkelson was born July 8, 1869 in Gulbrandsdalen, Norway, and came to this country in 1886 and settled in Janesville, Wisconsin. She later moved to Pennington County and was married to Ole Torkelson July 19, 1889. They made their permanent home on a homestead in Smiley township.

Surviving are her husband, five daughters: Bessie Hoffman of St. Paul; Pauline Fisher of Minneapolis; Thilda Hall of Minneapolis; Ruth Rardon and Thelma of this city; two sons, Melvyn and Anton Torkelson at home; a sister, Mrs. Hannah McPhee of Grand Forks; and ten grandchildren. One son, a daughter, her parents, one sister, three brothers, and two grandchildren preceded her in death.

Mrs. Torkelson was active in all church work, serving as an officer of the St. Pauli ladies aid, and being a charter member of the church.

Tobias P. Stene (1877-1941)

Thief River Falls Times, 18 December 1941

Mr. Stene, who was born on April 2, 1877 at Gudbrandsdalen, Norway, came to this county and has made his home in Smiley township ever since. He was married to Marie Valsvik on May 12, 1898 in Thief River Falls. His wife preceded him in death.

Surviving are eight children: Bertha and Thelma Stene of Minneapolis, Melvin, Mrs. Charles Krause, Mrs. Arnold Gunderson, Theresa, Arnold, and Stanley, all of Thief River Falls; two sisters, Mrs. Torkelson of this city and Mrs. McPhee of Grand Forks, ND.

Torkel and Sigrid Anfinson Family

Torkel Anfinson (1832-1919)

Spectator, 25 December 1919

Torkel Anfinson, aged 87 years, a pioneer resident of Smiley township near Hazel, died last Friday after a short illness. On the same day occurred the death of Andrew Hestekind, a well known and highly respected young farmer residing north of Hazel. His death was caused by tuberculosis. Double funeral services were conducted by Rev. Grimsrud at the St. Pauli church Monday afternoon.

Sigrid F. (Sarah) Anfinson (1830-1920)

Thief River Falls Times, 6 May 1920

Mrs. Sigrid Anfinson died at her home in Smiley township on May 1, at the ripe old age of 81 years, 7 months and 21 days. Death was due to asthma, from which she had been a sufferer for 15 years. Interment took place in St. Paul [sic] cemetery in Smiley.

Anfin M. Torkelson (1862-1947)

Thief River Falls Times, 20 February 1947

Anfin Torkelson, for 61 years a resident of Smiley township, succumbed at a local hospital Saturday, having attained the age of 84 years. Funeral rites for him will be conducted by Rev. Casper Fjelstul of St. Hilaire, at the St. Pauli Lutheran church this afternoon, February 20, at 2 o'clock and interment will be made in the church cemetery.

Mr. Torkelson leaves his wife, Mrs. Anetta Torkelson of Smiley township; four daughters, Mrs. Sophie Helgeland of Smiley township; Mrs. Ragna Terry of Bemidji; Mrs. Agnes Hanson of Goodridge; and Mabel Torkelson of Owatonna; three sons: Ludvig Johnson of Hawley, Thorvald and Oscar of Smiley township; two brothers: Ole Torkelson of Smiley township and Chris Torkelson of Hastings; and two grandchildren. His daughter, his parents and two sisters preceded him in death. Mr. Torkelson, born in Numedalen, Norway, May 12, 1862, came from Norway to Hawley in 1880,

living in that community for six years. In 18-- he homestead in Smiley township and has lived there since.

Annetta S. Torkelson (1886-1951)

Thief River Falls Times, 19 December 1951

Mrs. Anfin Torkelson passed away December 14 at her home in Smiley township. She had reached the age of 65. Funeral services were held at the St. Pauli Lutheran Church at St. Hilaire on Tuesday afternoon, with Rev. C. T. Fjelstul officiating.

Annetta Torkelson was born in Norway, October 3, 1886. When she was four years old, she came with her parents to the United States. The family first lived at Grafton [North Dakota] and in 1896 they came to Minnesota and homesteaded in Rocksbury township. On October 27, 1909 she was united in marriage to Anfin Torkelson. Eight children were born to them, one of which died in infancy.

Surviving are the following: Oscar, St. Cloud; Ludvig, Hawley; Thorvald, at home; Mrs. Arnold Helgeland, Thief River Falls; Mrs. Ed Hanson, Goodridge; Mrs. George Terry, Bemidji; Mabel Torkelson, Faribault. Four grandchildren remain together with five sisters and three brothers: Mrs. Hanna Nelson and Mrs. Art Torstveit, City; Mrs. Frank Lindman, Duluth; Mrs. Andrew Widme, Mahnomen; Mrs. Helga Johnson, Mahnomen; Roy and Louie Loken, St. Hilaire; and Hans Loken, Arizona. Her husband, her parents, and infant daughter, and three brothers have preceded her in death.

Ole Torkelson (1866-1950)

Thief River Falls Times, 24 October 1950

Ole Torkelson passed away at his home in Smiley township October 18. The deceased was born April 3, 1866 in Kon[g]sburg, Norway and in 1880 moved to Hawley and eight years later moved to Thief River Falls and settled on a homestead in Smiley township.

He was a charter member of St. Pauli church and served on the school board for a number of years. On July 19, 1889 he was married to Miss Mathea Stene at St. Hilaire, she preceding him in death.

Survivors include five daughters, Mrs. Robert Hamilton of Pueblo, CO; Mrs. Theda Hall of this city; Mrs. Ray Johnson of Fairbanks, AK; Mrs. Fred Stroberg of Bemidji and Mrs. Melvin Torstveit of rural TRF; two sons, Melvyn and Anton.

Ole and Mathea Torkelson Family

Sophie Torkelson Barnes (1889-1935)

Thief River Falls Times, 2 January 1936

Funeral rites were held Tuesday at the Larson Funeral Home chapel for Mrs. Sophie Barnes who died December 28 at Ottertail, Rev. R. M. Fjelstad officiating at the service. Interment was made at Greenwood Cemetery.

Mrs. Barnes was born in 1889 at Hazel, moving to McManville, Oregon in 1918. In 1926 she moved to Frazee where she was married to Harry Barnes and where she had since made her home. [According to the family, she didn't marry Harry Barnes until after her first husband died in 1932.] Surviving are her husband, two children Phyllis [should be Philip] and Marcella; her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ole Torkelson of Hazel; five sisters and two brothers, Pauline, Theda and Ruth of Minot, Bessie of St. Paul, Thelma, Anton, and Melvin at Hazel.

Bessie Torkelson Hamilton (1893-1976)

Thief River Falls Times, 7 June 1976

Funeral services for Mrs. Bessie Hamilton, 83, of Thief River Falls were held Saturday at 2 p.m., at the Green Funeral chapel. Mrs. Hamilton, who had resided for a time at Valley Home, died Wednesday at Northwestern hospital. Rev. James Swanson, pastor of the St. Hilaire Lutheran parish, officiated at the services. Mrs. James Johnson served as organist and soloist. Interment was in Greenwood cemetery. Pallbearers were Wallace Torkelson, James Johnson, Herb Torstveit, Oliver Swanson, David Odette, and Harold Arneson.

Mrs. Hamilton, the former Bessie Torkelson, was born April 13, 1893 in Smiley township, Pennington county, to Ole and Mathea Torkelson. She attended school and grew to womanhood in the Smiley community. On April 8, 1947 she was married in Thief River Falls to Robert Hamilton.

Following their marriage, they moved to Pueblo, Colorado where her husband was employed. Several years later, they returned to Thief River Falls and farmed in this area until Hamilton's death on May 28, 1969. She

was a member of the St. Pauli Lutheran church, where she was baptized and confirmed.

Survivors include two sisters: Mrs. Ruth Stroberg of Bemidji and Mrs. Thelma Torstveit of St. Hilaire; two brothers: Anton and Melvin Torkelson, both of Thief River Falls; and several nieces and nephews. In addition to her husband, she was preceded in death by one brother and three sisters.

Theda Torkelson Hall (1895-1951)

Thief River Falls Times, 22 March 1951

Funeral services were held Wednesday afternoon at the Gulbranson Mortuary for Mrs. Theda Hall, 56, who passed away March 17 in Smiley township. Rev. C. T. Fjelstul officiated and interment was made in Greenwood cemetery.

She was born January 13, 1895 in Pennington county [then Red Lake county] and was baptized and confirmed in St. Pauli Lutheran church. She was married to Hamilton Hall on July 25, 1928 and later lived in North Dakota and California. After the death of her husband five years ago, she came to live with her father, Ole Torkelson, in Smiley.

She is survived by four sisters and two brothers, Mrs. Robert Hamilton of Pueblo, CO; Mrs. Ray Johnson of Fairbanks, AK; Mrs. Fred Stroberg of Bemidji; Mrs. Melvin Torstveit, Melvyn and Anton of rural Thief River Falls.

Pauline F. Torkelson Johnson (1897-1972)

Thief River Falls Times, 13 September 1972

Funeral services for Mrs. Pauline Johnson, 75, of this city will be held Thursday at 2 pm at Trinity Lutheran Church. Mrs. Johnson died Saturday at the University Hospital in Minneapolis. Rev. Reuben Wangberg will officiate at the services. Mrs. Carl Nordvall will be the organist and Myrtle Weckworth, soloist. Interment will be in the Greenwood cemetery. Honorary pallbearers will be Gust Gustafson, Melvin Stene, Emil Thune,

George Netteland, John Fredrickson, and Maynard Wedul. Serving as active pallbearers will be Oliver Swanson, Craig Torkelson, Theodore Haugen, Wallace Torkelson, Herbert Torstveit, and James Johnson. The body will repose at Sinding's Funeral chapel, beginning at 7 pm today (Wednesday) at the church for one hour prior to the time of services.

Mrs. Johnson, the former Pauline Torkelson, was born April 30, 1897 in Smiley township, Pennington county, to Ole and Mathea Stene Torkelson. She grew up in this community and later was employed in Minneapolis, Washington and California as a beauty operator and window dresser. In 1945, she moved to Alaska and was married there at Nome in 1953 to Ray Johnson. For the past six years, she had resided in this city.

She is survived by two brothers: Melvin and Alvin [Anton] Torkelson, both of Thief River Falls; and three sisters: Mrs. Ruth Stroberg of Bemidji; Mrs. Bessie Hamilton of Thief River Falls; and Mrs. Thelma Torstveit of St. Hilaire. She was preceded in death by her husband in 1965, two sisters and one brother.

Melvin Olaf Torkelson (1899-1982)

Thief River Falls Times, 24 February 1982

Funeral services for Melvin O. Torkelson, 82, of rural Thief River Falls, were held Monday at 2:00pm, at the St. Pauli Lutheran church. Torkelson died Thursday evening. He was dead on arrival at Northwestern hospital. Serving as honorary pallbearers were Carl Finstad, Herman Rude, Arnold Helgeland, Gust Gustafson, Emil Thune, and Arnold Gunderson. Active pallbearers were Troy Torkelson, Todd Guerard, Mitchell Guerard, Maury Smith, Bruce Mathson, and Kamin Johnson.

Melvin O. Torkelson, a son of the late Ole and Mathea Stene Torkelson, was born September 6, 1899 in Smiley township, Pennington county. He attended school and grew to manhood in that area.

As a young man, he worked on farms in North Dakota, and later worked in lumber camps and in the Duluth shipyards. On February 17, 1931, he was united in marriage to Helen Wiken in St. Hilaire. Since then, he farmed in this area. He was a lifelong member of St. Pauli Lutheran church and

served for some time on the church council. He was assessor of Smiley township for 25 years, served on the rural school board, was a member of the ASCS committee and was a member of the Sons of Norway.

He is survived by his wife, three sons: Francis Torkelson, South Milwaukee, WI; Wallace, Thief River Falls; and Marvin, Union Grove, WI; five daughters: Mrs. Theodore (Geraldine) Guerard, South Milwaukee, WI; Mrs. Darryl (Wahna) Smith, Lawrenceville, GA; Mrs. Calvin (Faye) Shaw, Crawfordsville, IN; Mrs. Ivette Garrett, South St. Paul, MN; and Mrs. Kevin (Pamela) Kittridge, Sartell; 29 grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren; a brother, Anton Torkelson, Thief River Falls; and two sisters: Mrs. Thelma Torstveit, St. Hilaire; and Mrs. Ruth Stroberg, Thief River Falls. He was preceded in death by a son, Willis; one brother, Bert; and four sisters: Sophie, Pauline, Betsey, and Theda.

Helen Agnes Wiken Torkelson Olson (1909-1999)

Thief River Falls Times, 9 June 1999

Helen Torkelson Olson, 90, died Sunday, June 6, 1999 at Northwest Medical Center in Thief River Falls. Funeral services will be held today (Wednesday, June 9) at 2:00pm at St. Pauli Lutheran Church, rural Thief River Falls, with Reverend Terri Cuppett officiating. Grace Hammer will be the organist, and soloists will be Van Swanson and Terri Cuppett. Casketbearers will be Cere Smith, Damita Underwood, Dana Torkelson, Kari Torkelson, Kayla Pizzo, Kirsten Garrett, Linnae Lecher, and Marisa Johnson. Burial will be at St. Pauli Cemetery in Rocksbury Township of Pennington county. Visitation was held on Tuesday, June 8 from 5 to 8 pm with an 8pm prayer service at Green Funeral Home in Thief River Falls. Visitation will also be held for one hour prior to services at the church.

Helen Agnes Wiken was born on May 17, 1909 in Smiley township, the daughter of Halvor and Caroline (Rosedahl) Wiken. She was baptized and confirmed in Norwegian at St. Pauli Lutheran Church and attended school at Washington School, District 221. On February 17, 1931, Helen was united in marriage to Melvin Torkelson in Thief River Falls. The couple farmed in rural Thief River Falls all of their married life. Melvin died in 1982.

Helen was an organist at St. Pauli Lutheran Church for over 20 years and was active in its Ladies Aid and circle. She worked at Oakland Park Nursing Home and Northwestern Hospital as a nurse's aid and at Arctic Cat in the fiberglass department. She was a member of Sons of Norway and Golden Years Choir. She enjoyed dancing, playing the piano, farming, working outdoors and burning dead grass, crossword puzzles, travel, flowers, needlework and horses. Helen liked her coffee hot and her cake sweet. On July 3, 1983 she married Orris Olson and lived in Oklee until moving to Valley Home in Thief River Falls in February of 1998.

Survivors include her husband, Orris; one sister, Emma Haydal Stroud of Billings, Montana; two sons, Wallace (Delores) Torkelson of Thief River Falls and Marvin (Darlene) of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; five daughters, Geraldine Guerard of South Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Wahna Smith of Lawrenceville, Georgia, Faye (Oliver) Auchenpaugh of Thief River Falls, Ivette Garrett of South St. Paul and Pamela (Kevin) Kittridge of Maplewood; 30 grandchildren; numerous great grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her first husband, Melvin; two sons, Francis Marion and Willis; two brothers, Gustav and Martin; two sons-in-law, Theodore Guerard and Robert Garrett; and one daughter-in-law, Dorothy Torkelson

Ruth Esther Torkelson Stroberg (1904-1990)

Thief River Falls Times, 11 July 1990

Ruth E. Stroberg, 85, died July 9 at Oakland Park Nursing Home in Thief River Falls. Funeral services will be held July 13 at 2 pm at the Green Funeral Home chapel with Merton Roley officiating. Special music will be provided by Grace Hammer. Honorary casketbearers will be Mrs. Stroberg's great nieces and nephews. Active casketbearers will be Lyle Borge, David Odette, Oliver "Skip" Swanson, Craig Torkelson, Wallace Torkelson, and Herb Torstveit. Interment will be in the Greenwood Cemetery in Thief River Falls. The Green Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Visitation will be held from 1 to 9 pm Thursday at the Green Funeral Home in Thief River Falls and until the time of the services on Friday.

Ruth Esther Torkelson was born October 22, 1904 in Smiley township, Pennington county, the daughter of Ole and Mathea (Stene) Torkelson. She grew up and attended Washington District #221 School in Pennington county. She was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran faith at St. Pauli Lutheran church, rural Thief River Falls.

On December 6, 1945 she was united in marriage to Fred Stroberg in Thief River Falls and they made their home in Bemidji. Her husband died in 1971 and she continued to live in Bemidji until 1981 when she moved to Thief River Falls. She was a member of the St. Pauli Lutheran Church.

She is survived by one sister, Thelma Torstveit of St. Hilaire; and sister-in-law Helen Olson and brother-in-law Alfred Stroberg, both of Thief River Falls. She was preceded in death by her husband; her parents; four sisters: Sophia, Bessie, Theda, and Pauline; and three brothers: Melvin, Anton and Bert.

Anton Severt Torkelson (1907-1982)

Thief River Falls Times, 28 June 1982

Funeral services for Anton Torkelson, 74, of rural Thief River Falls were held Saturday at 2:00 pm at St. Pauli Lutheran church. Torkelson died Tuesday at Northwestern hospital. Rev. Gary Moore officiated at the services. Organist and soloist was Mrs. Arnold Hammer. Interment was in the church cemetery with the Green Funeral home in charge of arrangements. Serving as honorary pallbearers were Phil Lowe, Seymore Iverson, Gust Gustafson, Adam Lendobeja, Joe Belange, Harley Iverson, Eugene Rondorf and Roy Lokken. Active pallbearers were Russell Thune, Harlan Mostrom, Dennis Hoffman, Herb Torstveit, Wallace Torkelson and Ernie Thune.

Anton Severt Torkelson, a son of the late Ole and Mathea Stene Torkelson, was born November 21, 1907 in Pennington county. He attended school in Thief River Falls. On June 22, 1935, he was married in Thief River Falls to Ellen Johnson.

Since then, he had lived and farmed in Smiley township. During his early years, he worked for a time in the Grafton, ND area, was employed for

number of years by Stan Ranum construction; and in the early 60's, he operated the Torkelson and Johnson lefse shop in St. Hilaire. He also worked for a time for L. B. Hartz wholesale and had certified grain acreage for the ASC [Agricultural Stabilization Conservation] office. He was a member of St. Pauli Lutheran church, and for several years was clerk of the rural school board in the Smiley area.

He is survived by his wife, three daughters: "Mrs. Oliver (Patricia) "Skip" Swanson, Mrs. Lyle (Corine) Bjorge and Mrs. Carolyn Haugen, all of Thief River Falls; and a son, Craig Torkelson, also of Thief River Falls; eight grandchildren, Kevin and Brad Swanson, Charissa Bjorge, Jerod, Jason and Alicia Haugen, and Brett and Darren Torkelson; two sisters: Mrs. Ruth Stroberg, Thief River Falls; and Mrs. Thelma Torstveit, St. Hilaire; and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by two daughters who died in infancy; two brothers, Melvin and Bert; and four sisters: Pauline, Bessie, Sophie, and Theda.

Bert Otto Torkelson (1910-1926)

Thief River Falls Times, 24 June 1926

Fall Causes Death: Bert Otto Torkelson, son of Ole Torkelson of Smiley township died Thursday of last week, his death being caused by injuries to his back resulting from a twelve-foot fall from a tree the preceding Tuesday, when he was crow-hunting about a mile from his home. Bert was 15 years, 10 months and 20 days old at the time of his death, and had lived all his life on his parent's farm near Hazel.

He is survived by his parents, six sisters: Mrs. Harry [Sophie] Lowe of Frazee; Mrs. Henry [Bessie] Hoffman and Mrs. Virgil [Ruth] Call, St. Paul; Tillie of Sacramento, California; Pauline of Minneapolis; and Thelma, who lives with her parents; and two brothers, Melvin of Grafton and Anton, who also lives with his parents.

Funeral services were held Monday afternoon at 1:00 o'clock at the home, and at 2:00 o'clock at St. Pauli's church. Rev. C. M. Grimsrud officiating. Interment was made in the Greenwood cemetery.

Out-of-town relatives who attended the funeral were Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lowe and two children; Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoffman; Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Call; Melvin and Pauline Torkelson; Mrs. Hannah [Stene] McPhee of Grand Forks; and Mr. and Mrs. A. A. [Caroline Stene] Odegaard of St. Hilaire.

Thelma Florence Torkelson Torstveit (1913-2001)

Thief River Falls Times, 31 January 2001

Thelma Torstveit, 87, died Sunday, January 28, 2001 at her home in Rocksbury township of Pennington county. Funeral services will be held at 2 pm today (Wednesday, January 31) at St. Pauli Lutheran church, rural St. Hilaire, with Rev. Terri Cuppett officiating. Faye Auchenpaugh will be the organist. Casketbearers will be Wally Torkelson, Andy Harbott, Craig Torkelson, Jerry Broten, Bruce Mathson and Duane Knott. Interment will be in Greenwood Cemetery in Thief River Falls. Visitation was held from 2 to 7 pm on Tuesday, January 30, at Green Funeral Home in Thief River Falls. Visitation will also be held for one hour prior to services at the church.

Thelma Florence Torkelson was born on February 27, 1913 in Thief River Falls, the daughter of Ole and Mathea (Stene) Torkelson. She was baptized and confirmed at St. Pauli Lutheran church and attended Washington Country School. On January 29, 1944, Thelma was united in marriage to Melvin Halvor Torstveit in St. Hilaire. She helped her husband with farming and their dairy operation. She enjoyed gardening, reading, working crossword puzzles, playing the harmonica and especially spending time with family and friends.

Thelma is survived by a son, Herb (Darlene) Torstveit of St. Hilaire; a daughter, Valarie Torstveit of St. Hilaire, four grandchildren; a sister-in-law; and several nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband, Melvin; her parents; three brothers: Melvyn, Anton and Bert; and five sisters: Sophie, Bessie, Pauline, Theda, and Ruth.