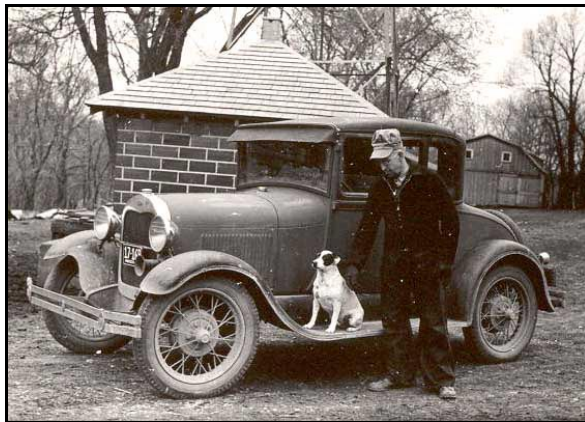


*Percival Narveson's  
Historical  
Sketches*



PERCIVAL NARVESON'S  
HISTORICAL SKETCHES



FOREWORD BY Georgia Rosendahl

EDITED BY Chad Muller

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*Spring Grove, Minnesota*

# Contents

FOREWORD by Georgia Rosendahl.....	i
PART I: PIONEER WAYS	
Minnesota Had Gold Rush: It Was Over Fertile Acres.....	1
Land Speculation Attracted Early Spring Grove Settlers .....	4
Slow Moving Oxen Broke the Soil.....	6
It Wasn't Always Easy to Get the Staff of Life.....	9
The Wayside in Pioneer Days Was Friendly Overnight Stop .....	14
PART II: TOWN HISTORIES	
The Beginning of the Norwegian Settlement at Spring Grove.....	17
Spring Grove to Recall Those Days in the 1850s .....	22
Anything Quiet as a Bee? .....	27
Stone Lady on Hill Watches Over Tiny Black Hammer Village .....	30
Newhouse Just Withered Away: The Speculators Sold Out Fast.....	36
Remains and History of a Once Blooming Village (Riceford).....	41
Trails, Villages Can Still Be Found (Wilmington Grove).....	48
Wabasha Was Once a Super County.....	52
Place Names .....	55
PART III: PEOPLE & THE PRESS	
The Memories of Vagrants .....	60
Marte Ole Thought He Knew Profit Key.....	63
Farm to Gold Mine to Farm (Anders Foss) .....	65
Professor Cornelius Narveson .....	69
Snowshoe Thompson—Bigger Than Life—Was a Living Legend.....	73
The Herald and Other Early Spring Grove Newspapers .....	76
PART IV: INDIAN HISTORY	
Indian History of Spring Grove and Houston County Regions.....	79
First Residents Here May Have Been Mound Builders .....	87
Was This a Busy Indian Highway? .....	91
How the Whites Forced the Indians to March.....	94
AFTERWORD by Chad Muller.....	99
NAME INDEX .....	100

# Foreword

This year as we celebrate Spring Grove's Sesquicentennial we are honoring one of our town's great historians: Percival Narveson.

Since 1852, we've been fortunate to have had many dedicated persons with the foresight to record in books and on film the happenings and events that have occurred during our town's 150-year history. It has been said that we will never know who we are until we know from whence we came. I believe this holds true for all of us who have lived or are living in Spring Grove and the surrounding communities. We have a longing to know these sturdy men and women who braved the hardships, the sicknesses, and the unforeseen perils of the wilderness in order to build their homes and raise their families. In many instances they left behind parents, siblings, and friends to seek their fortune in a new, untamed country.

Many of these pioneers came to Spring Grove from settlements in Wisconsin and other eastern states that had been settled earlier. When friends and neighbors arrived from Norway they stayed for a while with relatives in these eastern settlements, until they could "catch their breath" so to speak, and then most likely with oxen and wagon they moved westward. They crossed the Mississippi River near Brownsville or perhaps Prairie du Chien. Then following the Indian Trails, they entered the southeastern corner of Minnesota. Because they needed trees to build their homes and water to drink, they settled on the land around Spring Grove, so named because of the many natural springs in almost every valley as well as the large groves of virgin timber which covered the hillsides.

Percival Narveson was born on May 30, 1899. His parents, Narve and Hannah Narveson, lived on a farm in western Spring Grove. Percival graduated from high-school in the spring of 1919 and then went on to attend Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis where he learned the bricklaying trade. For a number of years he taught classes at Dunwoody, but eventually returned to his old home town. During the summers he applied his trade by building chimneys, fireplaces and silos for the people in and around town. Over the years he suffered from various health problems and after a slight stroke and trouble with his eyes, he eventually gave up the bricklaying profession and began to focus more on his writing.

He was a self-made man who was interested in nature and the world around him. With a stove-pipe purchased at a hardware store in town and with materials from the farm, he built a telescope so that he could view the heavens and the stars. Later in life, when he was 53 years old, he married Inga Hendrickson, a granddaughter of Nels Hendrickson, one of the early businessmen in Spring Grove. Her father Nelius, along with her uncles, at one time operated the Sattre Store which was and is still situated just across the border in Iowa.

Nelius eventually sold this store and started a restaurant on Main Street in Spring Grove, a business which his wife and daughter continued until Inga's marriage. Percival and Inga built a house in the country on land that had belonged to his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Haaken Narveson, who were some of the first settlers in Spring Grove Township. The two lived here peacefully until Percival's death on October 5, 1972.

He was a man always interested in people, their stories and anecdotes, and why their ancestors chose to settle in this corner of Minnesota. Over the course of twenty years he wrote about the people who immigrated to this region, cleared the land, built homes and became part of our heritage. In this collection of Percival's writings you will perhaps find a glimpse of one of your ancestors or a story very similar to an event that happened in their lives. It gives a picture of what life was like here in those early years.

Through these stories you will meet a host of people, from the adventurous Anders Foss, who ventured to California during the Gold Rush and came home penniless but richer in experience, to the folk-hero Snowshoe Thompson, whose relatives lived in the area. You will also, in "Memories of Vagrants," meet a few of the "penniless" wanderers that came and went. Many detailed town histories are to be found here, as well as the facts behind their names. Though Percival lived in Spring Grove, he was interested in the history of much of southeastern Minnesota.

You might have wondered what it was like to plow a field with a pair of oxen, or of the intricate process our ancestors went through to produce flour. In the section entitled "Pioneer Ways," these are just two of the many fascinating topics that are examined. One of Percival's favorite subjects was Indian history, and specifically the history relating to this area. He not only describes how the Indians were "forced to march" in 1848, forever leaving this area, but also tells in great detail how these people lived before the "coming of the white man." These and many other stories can be found within this collection.

Read, enjoy and then give thanks to one of our great historians.

*Georgia Rosendahl*  
*May 2002*

# PART I: PIONEER WAYS

# Minnesota Had Gold Rush: It Was Over Fertile Acres

The crowds that will begin establishing “squatter’s rights” before midnight, December 31<sup>st</sup>, along the route of the New Year’s Day Parade of Roses at Pasadena, California, or the people who stand in line for a rummage sale, have nothing on the U.S. government land-offices when this country was being settled. With much more at stake than a few hours of pleasure or a bargain in used clothes, the land offices were disorderly and the one at Brownsville in Houston County in 1854 was no exception.

Entrance to the office sometimes was made by brute force, and land buyers often waited from midnight on to be first when the office opened in the morning. An early history of Winneshiek County, Iowa tells of the extreme confusion that prevailed at the federal land-office in Decorah, especially on days when there were land sales. One frantic land buyer who got hold of the door-knob the day before the sale and hung on all night so as to be first when the office opened in the morning, froze both his feet—it was bitter cold. Brawls and street fights were common. Crowds were so great in land-office towns that hotel rooms and beds were at a premium. It was said that “you even had to pay for an opportunity to lean against a sign-post.” This kind of pandemonium was typical of all land-office towns.

Much of the turmoil was caused by claim jumpers. Persons who had staked out claims had preemption rights to that land, but there always were greedy and dishonest persons trying to dislodge squatters from their claims. First arrivals in this area were sometimes intimidated by threat of violence by persons claiming ownership to the lands. Others tried to prevent squatters from securing ownership by calling the land office’s attention to some trifling neglect in living up to the rather complicated details stated in the preemption act. Another trick of claim jumpers was to get a squatter drunk so he was unable to be present or know what was going on when his claim came up for sale.

Prior to 1854, no unsurveyed land in Minnesota was open to legal settlement. When squatters began staking out claims in southeastern Minnesota in 1852, there was no way of locating it by any legal description such as township, range or section. A squatter placed a stake in each corner of his land with his name posted on it and located it approximately in reference to natural objects such as trees, hills, rocks, streams or trails—a method known as the Metes and Bounds system. After the survey was made, squatters found their stakes hardly ever lined up with any cardinal points of the compass. Their lines overlapped those of neighbors and often straddled township and county lines. A few squatters near the Iowa

border discovered when the Minnesota-Iowa line was surveyed officially between 1849 and 1853, that their claims were on the state line or wholly within Iowa territory, and so outside the jurisdiction of the Root River Land District.

On August 4, 1854, Henry Mower Rice, a territorial delegate to Congress, secured passage of an act which extended preemption privileges to unsurveyed land in Minnesota. Settlers who staked out claims before passage of the act were trespassers and liable to prosecution. However, settlers had arrived in increasing numbers and by the end of 1854, most of the land in this area had been preempted. By the end of 1854 four land districts had been established in southeastern Minnesota, all fronting the Mississippi River. The Root River District, five townships wide north and south, took in all of Houston County and the southern tier of townships in Winona County. It extended to the western boundary of the territory of Minnesota.

The office for this large district was established at Brownsville on the Mississippi. At that time it was the most important town in southeastern Minnesota and was designated the Houston County seat. Here the register, J. R. Bennett, accepted filings for land and made most of the entry records, and J. H. McKennty, as receiver, accepted money paid for fees and land. When land cases were tried, a land commissioner made the decisions if the testimony of register and receiver disagreed.

Under the preemption act a settler, within 30 days of staking a claim, had to announce publicly his intention of preempting; within three months after receiving the survey plat, had to file with the land officers information as to where the land was located; and in 12 months, had to pay for the land. If the land came up for sale, he had to pay for it before the day advertised for sale of the land. In due time, the settler received a patent by the President of the United States.

Many real-estate agencies, law and banking firms sprang up in land-office towns, eager to assist and profit from the exchange of large amounts of land. The financial end of the sales at Brownsville was handled by the banking firm Dexter & Ripley. The land-office accepted only cash, script or land warrants as payments for land. Most of the bank's business was to furnish purchasers with money. Simon Waller & Company, Charles McIlrath, Thompson & Marshall, M. G. Thompson and Brownsville Real Estate Company were the agencies in Brownsville while the land-office was there.

Much land in Houston County not preempted by 1855 appears to have fallen into the hands of Waller, for his name is found on many land abstracts in this county. Apparently a shrewd speculator, he was able to dispose of all his land before the Money Panic of 1857, when land prices went down to or less than the government price of \$1.25 an acre. On August 7th of that year, Francis Aiken of Spring Grove Township became the first Houston

County purchaser. The first entry from Winona County was made by William Bunnell, who on August 20<sup>th</sup> filed his Declaration of Intention as a squatter.

In 1855 the first government land was placed on public sale at the Root River office. Time and conditions were set by presidential proclamation, but the mode of conducting the sales was left to the land officers. Because they received a commission on land sold, it was to their advantage that it brought a good price. There were no restrictions on how much land a person could buy, but preemption was limited to 160 acres. The number of acres offered for sale at Brownsville that year was 2,481,395. By October 1855, the Brownsville office had sold 39,807 acres, probably not including land sold to preemptors.

The following year the land-office was moved to Chatfield and with it went the real-estate firms, which depended on the exchange of large amounts of land for their existence. The closing of the land-office ended the bustle, excitement, activity and unruly crowds associated with it in Brownsville. However, Brownsville remained a thriving village for some time and became the great wheat market of Houston County. Long lines of teams stretched beyond the town, waiting their turn to unload at the warehouses along the Mississippi River.

The village had four newspapers in succession: *The Southern Minnesota Herald*, *The Free Press*, *Western Progress*, and *The Brownsville News*. If it hadn't been for the coming of the railroad, Brownsville still might be the metropolis of Houston County. As the Milwaukee road built up the river, it also sent branch-lines from Reno to Preston and easterly from the La Crescent area through Houston and Rushford, leaving little necessity for farmers to take their produce to river towns like Brownsville for shipping.

# Land Speculation Attracted Early Spring Grove Settlers

Two men who were active in the development of Houston County and Spring Grove lived in a house on the west edge of Spring Grove. It now is probably the oldest and most historic residence in the village that still is occupied by the same family line. One section of the rambling home was built of logs by Embrick Knudson Opheim, the first Norwegian to settle on what is now the site of Spring Grove.

Opheim arrived here in 1853. He may have been one of the early arrivals tricked by an alleged scoundrel named Arthur Bow into paying for what Bow termed his preemption rights. Bow, a Yankee from Vermont, was said to be the most notorious of several unscrupulous speculators in the area who illegally sold preemption rights to unsophisticated settlers. The exact year Mr. Opheim built the cabin is not known, but he was living in it in 1856. Often only temporary shelters were used until the settler received the patent to his claim.

Records in the U. S. land-office at Brownsville, which opened August 1, 1854, indicate Opheim was the first from Spring Grove to file his Declaration of Intention as a preemptor. The Register of Receipts in the same office showed he paid his claim and received his patent September 11<sup>th</sup> of that year. Opheim stayed in Spring Grove only about 12 years, but he was busy. He was active in public affairs when Houston County was created in 1854, and did much to get the township organized in 1858. Records of Spring Grove Township show he was the first treasurer. He was active in getting Trinity Lutheran congregation started at Spring Grove in 1855, and was a charter member.

In 1856 he was appointed postmaster to succeed James Smith, who had secured a post office for the community in 1854. Opheim moved the post office to his cabin and was postmaster until 1861. His home was on the old territorial road from Brownsville to Elliota, where stage coaches carried the mail. About 1865 Opheim sold his claim to Ole Christiansen Stensrud, an early blacksmith in the village. Between 1866 and 1867 he conveyed the property to his son-in-law, Ingvald Muller, and vanished from Spring Grove history. He may have followed the emigrant wagons streaming west past his cabin.

Muller was doctor, dentist, village platter and many things to the young community. Stated in O. S. Johnson's history of Spring Grove, Muller was a "descendant of a family of professional men from Værdalen, Norway. His father and uncle were high ranking officers in the Norwegian army. Others of his ancestors were doctors, lawyers and jurists." Muller

graduated from the school of pharmacy at the University of Oslo. On coming to the United States in 1864, he entered Rush Medical College in Chicago, but after studying there several months, he gave up the idea of becoming a doctor. The following year he came to Spring Grove. He married Live Stensrud, the daughter of Ole Christiansen Stensrud, who purchased Opheim's claim. He purchased his father-in-law's farm and settled down to agriculture, but was drawn into other interests. He fitted out one room in his home as a drug store and doctor's office; both he and his wife were kept busy tending the sick and dispensing medicines. Mrs. Muller was in great demand as a midwife.

Muller also pulled teeth. Without Novocain or other anesthetics, which were not yet in use, the operation hurt. His wife helped, holding the patient's head for an extraction. One patient is said to have jumped up and run off into the woods, with the tooth partially loosened. In 1878, Dr. Thor Jensen started a medical practice in Spring Grove, relieving the Mullers from most of the medical work except when Dr. Jensen had more calls than he could handle.

In the late 1890s Muller started a brickyard in Spring Grove, a thriving business until about 1906 when competition from brick-making plants in nearby cities and lack of suitable clay and fuel for firing forced him to close the plant. Muller was interested in developing the village; he had part of his land-holdings adjoining the business section platted into lots. Almost all the western half of Spring Grove is on what was Opheim and Muller land. The Mullers were hospitable people, their home highlighted by many a *Gjestebud* (social gathering). It also was a haven for many emigrant couples resting up after a long and arduous journey from Norway, and getting adjusted to surroundings in a new land before proceeding to free land westward. Many newcomers found employment on Muller's large farm.

The old log cabin underwent many alterations in the hands of Muller. It was covered with siding and became the nucleus to which several additions were made. Houses grew then with the advent of each new addition to the family. The main room in the original cabin was made into a parlor, with elaborate recessed paneling and wainscoting made to resemble blocks of sawed stone.

In 1894 Muller was instrumental in bringing Dr. Thron Stabo, a young man from Toten, Norway, to Spring Grove. Dr. Jensen's field of practice, extending from Iowa to the Root River, required an additional medicine man. After his arrival he made his home with the Muller family and had his office there until able to establish a home and office of his own. Mr. Muller lived on the place until 1907, renting it to his son-in-law, Hans Solum. In 1912 he sold the place to his son, Adolph, who lived there until his death in 1956. The more than 100-year-old pioneer home is now occupied by Adolph's widow.

# Slow Moving Oxen Broke the Soil

STRAYED: *a red spotted ox, horns wide apart, throws his legs sideways when he runs.*

LOST: *a red fat ox with a white tail, tipped horns, large crump, turning inwards.*

Such were advertisements in the lost and found column of the *Western Progress*, a newspaper published in Brownsville in the 1860s. At the time these kind of ads were appearing in frontier newspapers, oxen were the farmer's principal draft animal. Although in older communities horses were by the mid-1850s beginning to replace oxen for farm work, it appears that in this area oxen weren't in common use until the 1870s.

Early Decorah newspapers mention that oxen still were common on the streets of that city in 1874. According to U.S. census records, oxen in the state of Minnesota outnumbered horses ten to one in 1860, but a decade later there were 50,000 more horses than oxen in the state. In this modern age when high speed tractors will plow a large field in a matter of hours, there are probably few who can even imagine what it was like a century ago when plodding oxen were used to break the virgin soil.

Oxen were used both in the field and for going to market. As oxen were slow and could not cover more than 10 to 15 miles a day, they were not so well-suited for road work. The slow, swinging gait of oxen could neither be increased or slowed down. In modern terms we would say that they had two speeds forward: their slow, natural gait, and the gallop, which they resorted to when they became frightened, obstinate or plain ornery. As a rule oxen were gentle and easy to train and were dependable for field work. They possessed great strength. It was said they could out-pull a team of horses. They were long-limbed and slender, and often of large size. Oxen needed less care than horses, thriving on rough hay and a few ears of corn.

They were hitched together by means of a hollowed timber called a yoke. Unlike horses, they were driven without a bridle or reins. The driver would walk alongside with a long stick, giving them a prod on the shoulder and calling "Gee" for a right turn and "Haw" for a left turn. For this reason they were not as easily controlled as horses. Runaways were frequent. When they got thirsty they would stampede off to the nearest watering-trough or water-hole, the driver having no way of stopping them. If they got too hot they would wallow in a water puddle like a hog. When oxen became tired they would lie down with the yoke on. No amount of urging, prodding or profanity could move them.

Mrs. Paul Rosendahl, who was among the first arrivals in Spring Grove Township, recalled the time in the early 1860s when she had a ride from La Crosse to Spring Grove in a cart drawn by a pair of oxen. In La Crosse she met a hired man of Mons Fladager, an early merchant in Spring Grove, who was taking a load of dishes and crockery back. He offered her a ride home. Everything went nicely until they neared the Root River below Hokah. The oxen, sensing that water was nearby, galloped off to the river and tipped the whole load into the water.

Although oxen were not so well-suited for road work, we find that in some parts of the territory of Minnesota oxen played an important role in long-distance transportation. Probably no chapter in the history of transportation in Minnesota is more interesting and colorful than the story of the Red River trade, where oxen were used to transport furs and supplies between the settlements along the Red River Valley and St. Paul.

This mode of transporting supplies had been started by traders stationed as far north as Pembina, and by the late 1840s and early 1850s this trade had assumed such magnitude that the arrival of the hundreds of Red River ox-carts was awaited at St. Paul every summer. Dr. Folwell in his *A History of Minnesota* says, "The arrival, sojourn and departure of the Red River ox trains was for many years the most interesting event in St. Paul." The Red River carts were two-wheeled, carried about half a ton, and were drawn by one ox. As the wheels were never greased, the creaking of the carts could be heard for miles. The drivers were swarthy Indian half-breeds known as *bois brules*, who were fantastically dressed in semi-barbaric costumes.

Long caravans of carts, several hundred in number, would leave the Red River settlements in the spring when the grass was high enough for feed. As they traveled only about 15 miles a day, they would, after over 40 days, reach St. Paul in the early part of July. After disposing of their loads, which consisted mostly of furs and buffalo robes, and resting up their oxen for a couple of weeks, they would reload their carts with supplies for the next winter and start their long trek home.

In the early 1850s the probable day of arrival of the ox-cart trains in St. Paul was announced in the newspapers. They were eagerly awaited by young and old. During the hey-day of the Red River ox-cart trade, several hundred to 1,000 carts were lined up on Third Street in St. Paul. While the trade declined after 1850, caravans of over 100 carts were observed entering the city as late as 1851.

Some of the first arrivals in the Spring Grove settlement made the journey from eastern Wisconsin by oxen. After being ferried across the Mississippi at Prairie du Chien, they continued in a northwesterly direction across Allamakee and Winneshiek counties in Iowa, taking advantage of ancient trails and finally reaching Spring Grove after a journey of more

than 200 miles. On May 17, 1870, a party of emigrants started on the 400-mile journey from the Houston regions for Clayton County in the Red River Valley. As the caravan was made up of both horse- and ox-drawn vehicles, they did not reach their destination until July 9th. On this trek they averaged only 8 ½ miles per day. On the second night after leaving Houston they encamped on the site of Rushford. This will give readers an idea of the snail's pace at which ox-cart caravans traveled.

In the 1850s and the early 1860s oxen were used to haul wheat to the markets in the towns along the Mississippi. Farmers in the Owatonna area hauled their wheat as far as Hastings, a round trip of about 200 miles. While oxen were not as well-suited to the highways, the shortage of horses made their use a necessity. Probably the main reason for the disappearance of oxen as draft animals was the introduction of farm machinery. Their gait was too slow to give the right momentum to reapers, harvesters and mowers. Oxen were also unsuited for use on horse-powered threshers for instance, as walking in circles made them dizzy.

Although horses were scarce and oxen continued to be the chief draft animal until the late 1850s, it is interesting to note that the first reference to draft animals in what is now Houston County is in the U. S. census of 1850. The record says there was by that year one team of horses in the Brownsville settlement. The 1850 census does not list any oxen for the Houston County regions. This may be accounted for by the fact that the first arrivals were mostly adventurers, traders or river men, and not tillers of the soil. It is probable there were no oxen in this region before the influx of home-seekers began in 1852, many of whom came by ox-drawn carts.

Horses appeared on the scene slowly because they were scarce, there were not enough of them to meet the demand, and they were more expensive than oxen. Also, few of the settlers were acquainted with their care and use. The first horses were nondescript. Here in the Spring Grove area not much attention was paid to better grades of horses until the mid-1860s, when many purebred Morgans were brought into the Hesper, Iowa regions and spread northwesterly.

When and where oxen were last used in Houston County is not recorded. From what information the writer has been able to gather, oxen were last seen on the streets in Spring Grove in the late 1880s. Probably the last farmer in the vicinity to use oxen both for field and road work was O. S. Johnson, a resident of Wilmington Township. That was in 1888.

And so while oxen would not have found a place in this fast modern age, they were in pioneer days the farmer's principal draft animal.

# It Wasn't Always Easy to Get the Staff of Life

Supplying bread, the staff of life, for the family table, hasn't been a problem for the housewife for well over a century. In fact for more than half a century, housewives who were affluent enough didn't even have to touch flour, bread's chief ingredient, to feed her family—she could buy the finished product at a bakery.

A simple sign of progress, perhaps, but it took some hard-headed thinking on the part of many men to bring the flour industry from where it began in the neighborhood mill to the automated mills of today that grind the wheat and sack the flour with the flip of an electric switch. Early settlers in Minnesota had to grind their wheat by hand until the mills came. Some, like the aborigines, pounded grain in a mortar. Others grated wheat through a piece of tin punched with holes. Still others used coffee grinders.

For those who care to ponder on whence some of today's blessings came, one of the most fascinating chapters in the early history of this region is the development of the milling industry, from the mid-19th century to the flour mills that in the late 1870s comprised one of the area's leading industries, to the present when there are only four flouring mills remaining in the area: Bay State Milling, Winona; International Milling Company, Wabasha; and Tenant & Hoyt, Lake City, all large and highly automated; and the Roller Mills at Stockton.

The number of flouring mills operating in the late 1870s and 1880s was surprisingly high—90 in the Fillmore, Houston and Winona counties area; and within a radius of 50 miles from Spring Grove, there were more than 130 on the west side of the Mississippi River. There were 35 in Fillmore County, 22 in Winona County, 24 in Houston County (which Neill's history said were producing about 124,000 barrels of flour a year), and 52 in Allamakee and Winneshiek counties in Iowa. Gribbin's Mill, south of Whalen in Fillmore County, stands like a phantom of the past, part of its walls gaping from long disuse.

Many of the early flouring mills were small, but some were big. Largest of all was the Kaercher Mill at Clear Grit, Carrolton Township, Fillmore County, which had 14 run of stones. The Crescent Mill at Hokah had a capacity of 125 barrels of flour a day, and Houston Rollers had a capacity of 175 to 300 barrels a day. Both of these had six run of stones. Millstones were used for grinding meal and flour since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the pioneers often brought them from Europe when they immigrated. With a few exceptions they were set in motion by water wheels.

An early settler in Canoe Township, Winneshiek County, built a crude grist mill that was kept in motion by two men walking in a circle, pushing a long sweep attached to the upper millstone. The upper stone weighed 160 pounds and the lower 250 pounds, but there apparently was no lack of power for this mill was patronized by all the settlers for miles around. Ole Kaasa, an early settler in Highland Prairie, Fillmore County, is said to have had a hand-operated mill in 1855, with millstones he made himself.

Stone buhr mills, used until steel rollers were developed in Hungary in the 1860s, consisted of two circular stones from 2 to 7 ½ feet in diameter, weighing up to 1,600 pounds. They were mounted horizontally, one over the other. The lower stone was stationary and the upper was rotated, usually by water power. Grain was poured into a hole in the center of the upper stone. It was smashed as it fell, and ground fine between the radiating grooves of the two stones in a cutting and grinding action. One of the problems that faced early millers was obtaining correctly balanced millstones of the right texture and hardness for good wearing qualities and accurately cut.

When the stones became worn they had to be re-cut. This was a highly skilled trade, and expert millstone refinishers were in great demand. One of the expert refinishers was Hans Prestseter, a miller and millwright from Norway who for many years was head miller at Joseph Schwarzhoff's mill at Bee. Many of the larger mills imported their millstones from France, where the art of milling had attained the highest perfection.

Some of the mills obtained their millstones from rock quarried in New York. Most of the primitive mills in this area used stones quarried and dressed from rock found nearby. A few immigrants who had operated mills in Norway valued their millstones so highly they brought them along to this country. The millstones used by Jobe Brown at Riceford were of such quality they were still in use when the mill was destroyed by fire in the late 1890s, after 40 years of service. Other millers were said to have offered as much as \$1,000 for them.

As the maintenance of the early mills involved a constant struggle with spring freshets and flash floods, carrying away the dams and often the mill itself, it is not known how many of the mills listed in the old county histories and in Minnesota Historical Society records were among those that managed to survive through the first decades of settlement.

Records show that the flood of the night of August 6, 1866 destroyed or damaged most of the mills along the Riceford and South Fork valleys. Also, many of the primitive mills were forced out of business because they were unable to convert their machinery to more modern methods as the demand grew for better grade flour.

A few had hand-operated "bolting chests," but many made no attempt to purify the flour at all. Machinery for separating the bran and middlings from the flour was still in the

experimental stage. Neither was there any way to remove the germ of wheat, which is so objectionable in white flour. Up to this time the different steps in milling had not been combined into one operation. There were no conveyers for moving grist from one machine to the next, and there were no elevators for lifting the grain into hoppers—it all had to be done by hand.

The first roller mills, installed in Minnesota in the early 1870s, didn't crack the wheat kernels so the bran and middlings could be sifted out, so many mills continued using stone buhrs for the first grinding. In 1871 a new type of roller mill was developed which employed corrugated iron rolls for the first grinding. This was so superior that millstones were soon dispensed with entirely. The early mills depended on water for power and used large and cumbersome water-wheels, some 19 feet in diameter and three feet wide. Where water power was not available, huge windmills were employed. In the Minnesota River Valley there were windmills 60 feet in diameter.

Then came more efficient turbines, making more power available without raising the height of the dams. Small ones also were used, varying from two to four feet in diameter. There were many types on the market, all claiming superiority. In high favor in this area was the Eureka and the Mulligan Wheel manufactured by a company at Lansing, Iowa, which also made gear wheels, bolting machinery, smutters, separators, flour packers and other milling equipment.

The Miles Counter Pressure turbine was invented and manufactured at Lake City by a Mr. Miles, who operated a mill on Pine Creek in Fremont Township, Winona County. Others were the Leffel, Johns, Houston, Case, American, Whitmore, Michigan and the Flenekin, which was only 20 inches in diameter but developed 14 horsepower with a 17-foot head of water.

The next problem was better bolting machinery. While all primitive mills by the late 1850s had some devices for removing husks, straw, smuttballs and shriveled kernels, getting rid of bran and middling flakes remained a problem. Millers discovered that gluten derived from the middlings gave flour its strength and rising power. So they reground the hard flinty wheat grown in these northern regions several times through millstones or rollers, each set closer than the last until the middlings reached the required fineness, but there was no way of getting rid of the dark bran and middling specks.

The first bolting machines were crude affairs. They were made of revolving cylinders covered with bolting cloth, either wool or silk, and mounted at a tilt inside a wooden box referred to as a bolting chest. As these reels were slowly rotated by, the bran and the middlings were sifted out of the flour. Not much improvement was made in bolting machines until the mid-1860s when the La Croix brothers invented and installed a middling

purifier in their mill at Faribault. This machine was made up of a series of sieves. A light blast of air through them carried off the light bran flakes and prevented the middlings to tail off. With all these improvements, millers who wanted to stay in the business had to do extensive remodeling and install more modern equipment.

One of the hardships of first settlers was the lack of grist mills. It has been said that they pioneered hand-in-hand with the pioneers themselves. The first one in Spring Grove, if not the first in Houston County, was started by William Banning on Riceford Creek in the fall of 1851. It has been described in early histories of Houston and Fillmore counties as being very primitive. It was the butt of many jokes and yarns—one said that the contrivance came to a stop when a whole handful of wheat was thrown into the hopper at once. Someone else said that mice consumed the grist as fast as it was ground. Nevertheless, his mill was powered with a homemade water turbine, which in other instances followed water-wheels by many years. It had one run of 26-inch millstones, which must have been of excellent quality as they were later installed in the Crystal Mill at Riceford.

The art of milling was a highly-skilled trade. It took keen judgment and much experience to produce good flour from the different varieties of wheat that were brought in. It took experience to set the stones the right distance apart. If they were too close together, the mash became heated and stuck to the stones. If set just right so as to crack the kernels at the first grinding, the process of separating the bran and middlings from the flour was simplified.

An expert miller could tell by the feel of the flour between his fingers if the millstones were set right, like Peter and Patrick Gribbin, who came from Ireland in 1832. They reached Fillmore County in 1850, built a mill near Whalen in 1868, processed 80 bushels of wheat a day, and established a reputation for their flour. Later, when wheat-raising in this area came to an end, Peter's son dismantled the mill and shipped the machinery to Moody, North Dakota.

There was also Michael Schech, master miller from Bavaria, who purchased the three-story Caledonia Roller Mills in Sheldon, built in 1875-76 of native stone by John Blinn. Also associated with a flour mill in Minneapolis, Michael hired his brother Joseph to operate the Sheldon mill but himself manufactured "Shech's Best Flour," corn meal, rye, buckwheat, graham and whole-wheat flour from 1890 until 1913. They were in great demand.

Edward Schech continued to make wheat flour here until about a year before his death in 1941, when the production of flour by small mills in this area came to an end. When the mill was built it had four run of 4-foot millstones imported from France, three for flour and one for stock feed. It also had the best bolting machinery available, purifier, separator, smutter, corn sheller, etc., powered by a 35-inch and 23-inch turbine.

In 1922 extensive improvements were made, including a concrete dam, a water-wheel pit and a new 23-inch upright water turbine. After Edward's death his wife managed the farm and did custom grinding until retiring in 1946. Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Krugmire then took over (Mrs. Krugmire was the former Elenor Schech, daughter of Edward). The Krugmires have made plans to keep the mill as a tourist attraction. He also has many antique articles on display.

All the well-known millers in Spring Grove Township, including Edward Thompson, Henry Oatman, Charles Luttman, William Rowe, Michael Bernatz and Taylor Beeby, had years of experience in eastern mills before coming here, and Jens Ramstad, an early settler at Spring Grove, learned the trade at Riceford before becoming head miller at the Houston Roller Mills.

Old mill sites today, particularly where a foundation is left or even a depression, are now tourist attractions for folks who buy flour off a grocery shelf for making thickening, pastries, and even bread.

# The Wayside in Pioneer Days Was Friendly Overnight Stop

Pioneers trudging over the old Brownsville-Caledonia territorial road in the 1850s, or riding behind tired oxen or horses, often were forced by sheer weariness to stop at a hotel and tavern so diminutive in size they nicknamed it the “Seven by Nine.” The place was so small and always so crowded that the hostler and his wife slept in their chairs and they rented out their bed.

Information on the “Seven by Nine,” which was six miles west of Brownsville in Union Township, is meager, but descriptions of it by Samuel McIntire in his *Early History of the Yucatan Valley*, the Curtiss-Wedge *History of Fillmore County*, and the reminiscences of early settlers are vivid. According to McIntire, this hotel stood in a wild and lonely valley, in a spot so secluded that often the only sound breaking the silence was the barking of the proprietor’s dog, Sneider. The building was a long cabin, about 12 by 14 feet, one and a half stories, with a narrow entrance so low that the guests had to stoop to enter.

The innkeeper was an oldish, quaint, eastern Yankee named Joseph Ober, who with his long hair and whiskers would have passed for Rip Van Winkle anywhere. He spoke with a drawl while giving a hitch to his one lone suspender (which was all that kept his pants from yielding to the force of gravity). From his habit of always complaining of being tired, an excuse for laziness, he was nicknamed “Powerful Weak.” The hostler’s wife, also a Yankee, was described as being thin, straight as an arrow, entertaining, glib of tongue, full of energy and “as nimble as a cricket on a hot griddle.”

The one-room cabin had only two beds, one of which was so constructed that it could be folded up to the wall to give more room in the daytime. Nevertheless, the small cabin was known to have accommodated 22 persons in one night. The women slept downstairs and the men slept in the loft, which was reached from the outside via a ladder and trapdoor, but there were plenty of sheepskins and everybody kept warm.

A table, cupboard, two chairs, some stools and homemade benches constituted the furniture, besides the two beds that is. In a corner of the room was a stove that roared like a locomotive stalled in a snowdrift. The table was so small that some of the guests sat on the benches around the walls, plates on their laps. Sneider fared well, for now and then someone would throw him a bite from their plate. Mrs. Ober was an excellent cook and the food was plentiful.

McIntire, who came as a lad with his parents from Dedham, Massachusetts in 1855 and stopped overnight at the hotel, later wrote the following description of their stay: “We arrive in La Crosse by steamboat and were ferried across the Mississippi River to Brownsville. As our destination was the Yucatan Valley south of Houston, we proceeded by wagon along the territorial road that extended in a southwesterly direction toward Caledonia, and arrived at the curious edifice known as the Seven by Nine about sundown.

“Here we were met by the furious barking of a dog, the appearance of the hostler, his wife and about a dozen guests. We told the hostler we were tired and hungry and in need of lodging for the night. He was glad to accommodate us, and we soon found ourselves ushered into the already crowded room. In a short time Mrs. Ober, who was supple as a cat, had an excellent meal for us. For the night it was my lot to sleep near the trapdoor, but as I was dead tired I slept soundly.

“The next morning after a hearty breakfast we were again on our way. The winding valley with no other habitation in sight appeared even more lonely and desolate than it had the night before. My last glimpse of the hostler, his wife and the homey hotel was from a bend in the road that soon hid the place from view. While most of the events that took place on our journey from Massachusetts to Houston County have, after half a century, grown dim, to the end of my days I will never forget the kindly Mr. and Mrs. Ober and our stay at the Seven by Nine.”

This hotel also was a popular stopping place for settlers on marketing trips to Brownsville. It seems to have been preferred by many to the more expensive and fashionable hotels in town. It was also a stop for emigrants wending their way westward along the territorial road that had been laid out toward Caledonia in 1854. Many early settlers in the Spring Grove area spoke of having stayed over night there, or stopping in for a “quencher” before going on into town. It has been said that some were in a rather hilarious mood by the time they reached Brownsville after having partaken too freely of the refreshments served at the hotel’s bar.

Nothing is known about when this unique hotel was started or when it went out of existence. It is not mentioned in early histories of Houston County, and to present residents of the area, it is mere tradition. It is known, however, that in about 1857 Mr. Ober moved to Preston where he started a hotel known as the Preston House. No trace can be found of the subsequent history of the “Seven by Nine,” but it probably went out of existence soon after changing hands.

There is some question as to its exact location. The present highway between Brownsville and Caledonia doesn’t follow the course of the territorial trail; therefore, it must have stood some distance from any of the present roads, on a spot that now can be reached

by foot only. Recently, with clues furnished by residents of the area, I hiked down a rocky ravine descending into what is known as Sullivan's Valley in the northwest quarter of Section 25, Union Township. At the mouth of the ravine, right alongside the still discernible tracks of the old territorial trail, is a depression in the ground marking the site of a building. I believe this is where the "Seven by Nine" stood. The spot seems in many ways to fit McIntire's description. It still is as wild, lonely and secluded as when he stayed there in 1853.

Without unduly stretching my imagination, I can see the bustle and excitement that ensued when a stagecoach dashed into view on this once busy thoroughfare, or the momentary consternation of the landlady when a long emigrant caravan rumbled up the road seeking food and shelter for the night, taxing her ingenuity to supply their needs in her little "Seven by Nine."

## PART II: TOWN HISTORIES

# The Beginning of the Norwegian Settlement at Spring Grove

While early histories of Houston County tells of James Smith, an Englishman, as being the first to stake out a claim and to start a business in Spring Grove, no mention is made of the Norwegian settlement started in that area in 1852. There are probably many who are not acquainted with the fact that the Norwegian settlement at Spring Grove was one of the first and largest Norwegian settlements to be started in the territory of Minnesota, and of the events that led to the starting of this large settlement.

When Torger Johannesen Tendeland, in 1852, staked out his claim in what later became Section 15, Spring Grove Township, he little realized that it was the start of a Norwegian settlement that a decade later would extend from the Iowa state line and north to the Root River, and would embrace much of Wilmington township, all of Black Hammer and Spring Grove and the eastern tier of townships in Fillmore county.

Although Norwegian emigration into Iowa territory did not assume large numbers until in 1849, a small group of Scandinavians had as early as 1840 crossed the Mississippi from Illinois and formed the nucleus of a Norwegian colony along Sugar Creek, west of Keokuk, in Lee County. The settlement had increased to about thirty families but, as the settlement was located in an area where Quakers and Mormons were very active, the colony never prospered since it appears that settlers of other faiths had difficulty in securing title to their claims, and the Norwegians gradually moved out of the area. The abandonment of the Sugar Creek colony seems to have had little or no effect on the later emigrations of Norwegians into Iowa territory.

The first Norwegians to make their appearance in northeastern Iowa were Ole Halverson Valle and Ole Tollefsrud Kittilsland, who in 1843 ventured across the Mississippi and secured employment at the Indian Agency at Fort Atkinson. This fort had been built in the southwestern part of Winneshiek County in 1840, to protect the white men from the Indians, and to protect the Winnebago, who were occupying this area from the marauding of other tribes.

At the time Valle and Kittilsland were employed at the fort an attempt was being made by the government to instruct the Indians in the white man's way of farming, and the two Norwegians worked at this along the Iowa River bottoms near the site of Decorah. In 1846, Valle quit his position at the fort and he was replaced by his cousin, Soren Olsen Sorem. He

secured a job in the culinary department at the fort. A year later he secured a job as an assistant cook at the fort for another cousin, Ingeborg Nielson. Soren and Ingeborg later became man and wife. When the Winnebago tribe in 1846 was moved out of this area and into Todd County, Minnesota in 1848, Mr. and Mrs. Sorem accompanied the cavalcade and so became the first Norwegians to enter Minnesota.

After Norwegian emigrations into northeastern Iowa in 1849 began in large numbers, the starting of new settlements followed in rapid succession. By 1850 Norwegian settlements had sprung up in various parts of Winneshiek, Allamakee, and Clayton Counties. All these Iowa settlements later became a haven for settlers when scouting around for land in Fillmore and Houston counties.

The first Norwegian to make his appearance in the southeastern Minnesota was Even Ellertson Dahl, who in 1851 staked out a claim north of Hesper, in what later became Newburg township. Although this was a beautiful prairie country it seems to have attracted Norwegian settlers more so than the rugged country found farther north in the county. One reason may have been the lack of springs; and the sheltered valleys in the northern part of the county were more like what they were accustomed to back in Norway. Whatever the reason, Even Ellertsen in 1856 sold out and moved to the hamlet of Bratsberg in Holt Township.

When settlers in 1852 began prospecting for land north of the Iowa line, there were several accessible routes into Houston and Fillmore county. One was an ancient Indian trail that extended from the mouth of the Yellow River across Allamakee County and over to the Root River. The other was the Winona-Fort Atkinson Trail, commonly referred to as the Government Trail. This trail came up from Iowa, and north through Spring Grove Township, and on into the Root River Valley. After Houston County was created in 1854, a territorial road was laid out west from Brownsville, across Houston County, and over to Newburg in Fillmore County. This then became the route followed by emigrants that were ferried across the Mississippi River at La Crosse and Brownsville.

While not known with certainty, it is believed that Torger Tendeland, the first Norwegian to make his way into the Spring Grove area, may have come by way of one of the settlements in Allamakee County. Tendeland was born in Stavanger, Norway in 1818. In 1849 the family emigrated to America and settled first at Beloit, Wisconsin. In 1852, the family crossed the Mississippi at McGregor, Iowa and traveled by a covered wagon drawn by oxen until they reached one of the Norwegian settlements in Allamakee County. Here he left his family and belongings and continued by foot northward until he reached what later became Spring Grove Township, where he staked out a claim to his liking.

When the first comers began scouting for the land in the Spring Grove area they were plagued by a number of land speculators—that is, scoundrels who claimed priority to the land. After Torger Tendeland had staked out his claim, he was accosted by Arthur Bow, the most notorious of these scoundrels. He claimed priority to the finest land in the area, and is known to have intimidated many land seekers so that they moved on to other communities. Bow was an arrogant, insolent Yankee, a man of large build, who was always armed with a pistol—so there were few, if any, who cared to argue with him. Tendeland then went back to his family in Iowa, but after finding out that Bow did not have priority to the land, he came back to Spring Grove later on that summer and established himself on his claim.

By the time Tendeland came back to Spring Grove, a party of four—Haaken Narveson, Knud Knudson Kieland, Fingal Aslesen Flaten, and Truls Haga—had arrived and established themselves in Section 10, north of Tendeland's claim. They had been tricked into paying a scoundrel named John Vale, for what Vale termed his preemption rights. Soon after, Peter Johnson Lommen, his brother John Lommen, and Knud Bergo established themselves in Section 3; and in that same fall came Ole and Tollef Amundsen Berg, Knud Olsen Wold, and Ole Ulen.

The years of 1853 and 1854 saw the arrival of a large number of Norwegians who were destined to be long-time residents of the Spring Grove community, some of whom were to play an important role in the civic, political and religious history of the township: Ole Steneroden, George and Levor Temandsen Quarve, Knud and Ole Sagedalen, Knud and Teman Gilbertson, Hans and Gulbrand Nielsen Myrah, Anders Kroshus, Jens Elemoen and his son Thore Jensen Elemoen, later a well-known pioneer doctor in Houston County; Nels Tweito, Hans Bakke, Even Hoime, Hans and Elling Ellingsen, Gunder Traaen, Lars Reiersen Halstenrud, Elling Kieland, Embrick Knudsen Opheim, Ole Stensrud, Embrick Benson Enderud, Truls Paulsen, Hans Rosendahl and his son Paul Rosendahl; and there were many others whose exact years of arrival is not recorded.

By the end of 1854, most of the land in the township, except what had fallen into the hands of land speculators, and small parcels along the valleys, had been occupied. Later emigrants had to purchase their land at inflated prices from speculators. After the Money Panic of 1857, some were lucky enough to purchase land from speculators who were trying to get rid of their holdings at any price.

Although the village of Spring Grove was located in an area settled almost exclusively by Scandinavians, the actual founder of the village and its first business men were all of other nationalities. As we have stated, the village had its start in 1852 when an Englishman named James Smith staked out a claim, built a cabin and opened a store in the eastern half of

Section 11. In 1854, he platted his claim, secured a post office for the community, and from the many springs in the area he gave it the name Spring Grove. In 1858 he sold out his holdings to Robert McCormick, who continued to operate the store and to accommodate travelers. This is probably the Stage House referred to in early township records.

About 1855 an Englishman named William Fleming moved into the Spring Grove settlement and purchased the forty of land on which the main business section of the village is now located. Here he built a large log cabin which he fitted out as a tavern and a community hall. This place became known as the Pumpkin Tavern. This appears to have been the main social gathering place in town until Fleming's death in the late 1850s. In 1857 another Englishman named William Hinkley arrived in Spring Grove and built a frame building along the side of the territorial road in the western part of Section 11, where he opened a hotel and a tavern. After buying out McCormick's stock of goods he began operating a general store in the same building.

Hinkley appears to have been at heart a speculator and probably never intended to make Spring Grove a permanent home, for by the early 1860s we find him operating a store and tavern, and engaged in selling land and town-site lots in Riceford. Among the attempt by non-Norwegians to establish a business in an all Norwegian community can be mentioned a saloon started by James Demeron of Caledonia.

Another short-lived business venture was the mercantile firm of Tart and Smith. This was started by J. C. Tart and T. C. Smith of Dorchester, but after a couple of years they also closed their doors. Whether the Spring Grove community did not appear to have a future, or that Englishmen found it difficult to carry on a business in an all Norwegian community, is not known, but by 1866 the only businessmen left in Spring Grove were Norwegians.

The year of 1859 saw the arrival of Mons Fladager, the first Scandinavian businessman in Spring Grove. In that year Mr. Fladager, who is regarded as the father of Spring Grove business, opened a general store. This was the beginning of the Fladager family's connection with the mercantile industry in Spring Grove, a connection that was to last until 1967, when Maurice Fladager sold out to Robert Hillman.

The next Scandinavian to establish a business in Spring Grove was Nels Hendrickson Stoen, who in 1864 opened a general store. For almost forty years Mr. Hendrickson was one of the town's leading merchants. He was connected with the mercantile business in Spring Grove until his death in 1912. In 1865, he was joined by his cousin Nels Onsgard. For about fifty years, Mr. Onsgard was one of the town's leading citizens. After a short while he dissolved his partnership with Nels Hendrickson and went into the implement business.

After continuing in the implement business until about 1879, he next went into partnership with Haaken Kieland in a general store. It was while in this partnership with Kieland that he began banking in a small way. About 1890, he organized the Onsgard Bank. In 1907, this was organized into the Onsgard State Bank, an institution of which he was president until his death in 1915.

During the 1870s and the 1880s many Scandinavian businessmen and professional men established themselves in Spring Grove: Asle Halvorson; Ole Iverson; Sven Ellestad, printer-merchant and jeweler; hardware and implement dealer Charles Hoegh; merchant and restaurant man Bruun (Brown) Anderson; merchant and banker Ole B. Tone; druggist and merchant, Elling Reieron; veterinarian, druggist and hotel keeper, Mathias Schmidt Nilsen; druggist and farmer, Ingvald Muller; jeweler and clock maker, Ole Hasledalen; photographer and undertaker, Christian Engell; grocer, Truls Paulsen and Steiner Reieron; physician, Dr. Thore Jensen; hotel keeper and merchant, Teman Gilbertson; and grain and stock buyer, Ole Roppe. Most of these well-known business men were in business until well after the turn of the century.

It is now one-hundred and nineteen years ago since the Norwegians began staking out claims and establishing their homes in the Spring Grove area, and while many changes have taken place during these many years, we still find that many of the old homesteads are in the hands of the descendents of those that obtained the land from the government. The Scandinavians have always cherished their Norse heritage, and as most of the pioneers were Norwegians they naturally tried to preserve this heritage and the language that was handed down from their ancestors.

# Spring Grove to Recall Those Days in the 1850s

Excitement was at a fever pitch in this pioneer area of the new territory of Minnesota in the year 1854. Rough as it was, a real road came through. A territorial trail, which was to become famous, was laid out from Brownsville on the Mississippi River, via Caledonia and Spring Grove, en route to the now ghost town of Elliot, where it intersected with the St. Paul-Dubuque Trail. Covered wagons began rolling through on their way west, but there were other exciting things to come in the half century ahead. This is a story of Spring Grove's first 50 years.

The man who translated Ibsen's *Duke Hjem* into the English *A Doll's House* lived here in the 1880s. Elias Molee Velo, linguist, spent much of his life inventing and perfecting a universal or simplified language he named "Teutonish." He described it as "a language made of self-explaining, home-grown, Saxon-English, which eliminates all capital letters and all foreign-borrowed, thought-hiding words and expressions."

The most popular topic of the Spring Grove and Wilmington debating society was: "What has caused the most suffering in this world, war or alcohol." Truls Paulson, while in the legislature in 1883, did much toward establishing a Norse department at the University of Minnesota. Political questions were violently aired around the stove in the rear of his Spring Grove store. Ole Tone, also in the legislature, helped organize the Spring Grove State Bank. His hardware store partner, O. B. Nelson, former teacher, telegrapher and depot agent, represented the First District in the 35th and 36th legislative assemblies.

James Smith, the first settler here in 1852, hurriedly secured a post-office for his combination cabin, store and hostelry when the territorial road came through and Spring Grove was born, forever after to be listed as such in the official U. S. Postal Guide. And all in the same year, a new county came into being—Houston. Smith was named chairman of the commissioner court, the governing body, and later helped set off the townships.

The virgin soil was rapidly being turned into rich crop-growing land by the increasing number of eager settlers. It was time to round out the tenets of established government by adding the judicial. Smith became justice of the peace. The first election in Spring Grove was held in Smith's cabin in 1855, when Caledonia was selected as the county seat. His work done, Smith in 1858 sold his property to Robert McCormick and moved to Caledonia. His cabin became McCormick's "Stage House."

Man can't live by government alone. Smith's wife, the first married woman here, opened the first Sunday school for children of the English settlers. A Norwegian Lutheran congregation was organized in 1855, served by missionaries until the Reverend F. C. Clausen accepted a call from Norway in 1857. A public school opened in 1857 with James McDonald, a stone-cutter and strict disciplinarian from Brownsville as first teacher. Prior to that children attended "peripatetic" school, where teacher and children moved from home to home.

Another first in the history of this village was Embrick Knudson Opheim. His became the first name from Spring Grove to appear on the records of the U. S. land-office at Brownsville when he filed his intention to purchase a claim. On arriving, probably in 1853, he built a cabin on the south side of the territorial road, a quarter mile west of Smith's cabin. It was the first home within what now are the confines of the village.

The first building on land south of Main Street, in what is now the main business section of town, was the "Pumpkin Tavern," so named because the owner, William Fleming, found himself short of sleeping room for lodgers one night. A bedroom annex was erected by piling pumpkins at the corners to hold up the roof and serve as anchors for the hastily gathered rough siding. Fleming capitalized on the incident to give his short-lived place its name. He was the first adult to die in Spring Grove.

Fleming, arriving in 1855, purchased a forty of land from Smith. Sleeping room in the cabin built by this genial host was always at a premium. His place also served as a community hall, and his taproom was popular. Peter Halvorsen Torgenrud became the owner in 1857, and the building passed on to Mons Fladager in 1859. It was a little west of what is known as Fladager's corner.

A familiar landmark in Spring Grove until 1940 was a frame store, hotel and tavern erected by William Hinkley, a Yankee speculator from Connecticut who opened for business a half-mile west of the Stage House. An early history of Houston County described Hinkley as a "dealer in wines and whiskeys, which in those days meant 'whiskey straight.' His supply of whiskey was kept in a compartment near the foot of his bed. Weary travelers at any time of the night would gently tap at his window, pass in a bottle or jug, with the 'equivalent,' and Hinkley would fill it without getting out of bed and hand it to the customer."

More interested in land prospecting than founding a permanent home, Hinkley leased his place to Joseph and Pauline Prentis, arrivals from Vermont, and moved on to Riceford. Teman Gilbertson, acquiring the property, erected a two-story brick building across the street as a more modern hotel which he operated until the late 1890s. For many years this was the only hotel in the village.

Blacksmiths Ole Stenrodden and Ole Stensrud had their forges going before 1860, the former along the territorial road, the latter on the west-edge of town near Opheim's cabin. Stenrodden had learned to be an expert locksmith from his father, the most ingenious at his trade in his community in Norway. Stensrud was an expert at making horse-shoes.

Two Irishmen, James and Nick Demeron, opened a saloon here in the mid-1850s but didn't stay long, perhaps because they didn't feel at home with the Scandinavians. Spring Grove once had a brewery; it was started in 1866. The capacity was 15,000 gallons of beer a year. Teman Gilbertson bought it in 1873, with the condition that the manufacture of beer be discontinued. Causing much concern to Reverend Clausen was the saloon started about 1860 by Mikkel Reme. It had a reputation as a disorderly spot, but Spring Grove's first police officer was there. Erik Trostheim, hired as bouncer, also was called upon to quell disturbances at other business places.

Because of a depression following the Money Panic of 1857, the building of a church was not started until 1860 and not completed until 1868. John Walsh was hired to make and burn the thousands of bricks needed for the job of building Spring Grove's second church in the 1870s. This church was destroyed by fire on April 3, 1893, and a new one was started at once. A new brick school was erected in 1899 to replace a two-story frame building.

Considered by some as the real founder of Spring Grove was Mons Fladager, who arrived in 1859 to become one of the most active and leading citizens. He opened a general store which was a family institution for 107 years until Maurice Fladager finally sold to Robert Hillman. Operating this and a clothing store with and after him were Mons' sons Peter, Martin and Henry, and the latter's son Maurice. Since before the turn of this century Fladager's store operated under the sign of the lion, so-called because of an English-made lion statue set in front of the building. It was presented to the elder Fladager by Mons Anderson, a La Crosse manufacturer of Lion brand clothing.

It was largely through the efforts of Mons Fladager that the main business section of Spring Grove was located where it is. Previous to 1859 the town was strung out for over half a mile east and west of the territorial road. With the coming of the railroad in 1879, Fladager platted his land and sold lots, and through his efforts the railroad company abandoned its plan of building a station in Smith's Grove and erected it a quarter-mile west. Thereafter, Smith's Grove gradually was abandoned.

Two other prominent businessmen were Nels Hendrickson, who arrived in 1858 as a farm-hand who later took over James Smith's store, moved into the Stage House, and then went into partnership with his cousin Nels Onsgard, who became the first banker. They erected a two-story stone building in 1867, where in the early 1880s Onsgard started a

creamery. It was razed in 1960. Hendrickson later built the brick structure now occupied by Ulven & Son drug store. As Onsgard was a man of large build and Hendrickson short in stature, the partners were referred to by their customers as Big Nels and Small Nels.

Prior to going into butter-making Onsgard opened an implement store, a business that was coming into its own with the beginning of farm mechanization. While in the Creamery he was awarded a silver medal for the quality of his butter at the Industrial & Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans in 1884-85. From 1885 to 1890 Onsgard was postmaster. After entering a partnership with Haaken Kieland in a general store in 1890, he started banking in a small way by taking care of the financial affairs of customers as a personal accommodation. He kept money for them in a large safe in the rear of the store. In 1907 he converted his private bank into a state bank. He died in 1914 as one of the town's most respected citizens.

The event that did most to bolster the community was the coming of the railroad in 1879. Farmers no longer needed to haul produce to the river towns, and building materials coming in by rail caused a building boom. Day Brothers of Decorah, Iowa opened a lumber yard a week after freight service started; it was sold the following year to James Vincent & Son. Lars Budahl bought them out, sold to Narve Narveson and Martin Storlie, and Narveson later sold his interest to Newhouse, Olsen & Storlie. Prior to the opening of the line, the railroad company had built an elevator and leased to the McMichaels Grain Company of Brownsville, who later operated elevators in most of the stations along the Reno-Preston branch.

The arrival of professional men began in 1876 when Dr. Thor Jensen opened a 40-year career and became physician and sympathizing friend from the Iowa River north almost to the Root River. He and Elling Reierson, a graduate pharmacist from the University of Wisconsin, started a drug store, which was continued by members of Reierson's family until after 1920. In 1887 Dr. Jensen secured as assistant Dr. Christian Onsgard, just out of medical school, who stayed with him until 1893 when he opened his own practice in Rushford. Dr. Thron Stabo from Toten, Norway, who joined Dr. Jensen in 1894, moved on to Decorah in 1906 and was appointed Norwegian Vice Council for the state of Iowa.

The first newspaper here was printed in Norwegian and started in the 1880s by Sven Ellestad. Much of the editorial work was done by Matthias Schmidt Nilsen, who in the previous decade opened a drug store, rooming-house and restaurant, and also was a graduate veterinarian from Norway. He contributed articles to many other Norwegian papers in addition to the *Spring Grove Posten*, which sold for 50 cents a year and was suspended after a two-year struggle. Ellestad also ran a music store. The *Spring Grove Weekly Press* began

publication in 1891. Lars Stenholt, writer, made his home here several years, wasting his talents it was said, on scandal and derision of the church, clergy, professors and anyone in authority. He was the author of many books.

Spring Grove was incorporated as a village on December 31, 1889. In 1895 a water-system was installed. It replaced the only supply—a 70-foot well, hand-dug, lined with masonry; the water was raised by windlass and buckets until a windmill was erected. Some fire-fighting equipment was purchased as early as 1891 and a few sidewalks and crosswalks had been installed. The kerosene lights that hung along Main Street in 1898 were replaced by gas-lights in 1901.

There were many other businessmen who helped the growth of the young town during its first half century: Christian, Haaken and John Schansberg, Solberg and Muller Brothers and Peder Jorgenson, merchants; a cooper shop that made butter tubs; Brown Anderson, auctioneer, deputy sheriff, turnkey and restaurant operator here for 50 years, succeeded in turn by his son, Albert, and the latter's son, Albert Junior; Asle Halversen, supervisor, assessor, justice of the peace, school clerk and mayor, who also was postmaster at Amherst for a time where he operated a store; Elling Flaskerud, master painter; Christian Engell, photographer; James Smith, harness maker; blacksmiths Ellef Tingerson, Otto Brenner, Christian Nilson, whose shop was connected with Iver and Berge Floberg Johnson, wagon makers, and Hans Hilden, Norwegian army veterinarian; Charles Hoegh and John Cluss, hardware; Laura Parker, millinery; Sophia Dahler, dressmaker; James Royce, stock buyer; Ole Hasledalen, jeweler; Thore Bergh, sewing machine, hardware and implement salesman; J. Schneider and Ingvald Muller, who ran brick yards. Muller employed eight men, with Ole Kjos as foreman. Making bricks required a lot of fuel, and many Norwegian newcomers were employed in cutting wood for firing in the kilns. This also furnished extra income for farmers clearing land.

The history of Spring Grove since the first Homecoming in 1907 is fresh in the minds of many current residents—the coming of the factory that has been such a boom to the village, the new hospital, the new homes and businesses, new roads, and probably most of all its close contact with the world around through the modern miracles of science. But the first days of Spring Grove were just as exciting for their time in history.

# Anything Quiet as a Bee?

A village that once had a post-office and produced butter that rated the quality-award of the National Creamery and Buttermaker's Association now has a population of only eight. Sales taxes afflicted the hamlet of Bee years before they came to Minnesota, and there were other complications at Bee because the village store and saloon straddled the Minnesota-Iowa line.

It was the Irish who first looked with favor on this scenic little spot between high hills through which Waterloo Creek flows. They came in the early 1850s but soon moved on, leaving cultivation of the lands to Scandinavians who began streaming into the locality in 1854-55. Early history is scanty, but by the early 1860s a post-office had been established, a mill built, and there were several stores.

It was Joseph Schwarzhoff, a native of Westphalia, Germany, who made the settlement boom. After arriving at Dorchester, Iowa in 1853 with his parents, he opened a brewery there in 1862, rented it to an operator in 1868, moved on to Highlandville, Iowa, and after a short stay there settled at Bee, where at 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations and on other festive occasions he was unable to keep the crowds supplied with beer—evidence that already the area was well-populated. Schwarzhoff didn't have much trouble running his store at that time—despite the fact that some of the shelves were in Iowa and the others in Minnesota—but operating the saloon in the same building caused complications.

Iowa had been dry since 1855. It appears that this state-line village wasn't bothered too much by officialdom until 1885 when the laws on intoxicating beverages became more stringent. But the owner solved that by moving his liquors to the Minnesota side of the building. There were advantages in operating in two states. When an Iowa sheriff pursued a lawbreaker, he could step over the Minnesota side to protect himself from arrest. Likewise, Minnesota law-enforcement officers could not pursue a lawbreaker into Iowa.

Bennie Magnusson (now of Spring Grove), who operated the Bee store with his mother, Mrs. Magnus Magnusson until her death in 1936 and then until 1950, recalls the sales-tax problem. Iowa had adopted the sales-tax long ago but Minnesota didn't until this year. To keep the prices uniform, he paid the tax out of his own pocket. While both Iowa and Minnesota had cigarette taxes, the Iowa taxes were higher, so the cigarettes were stored and sold on the Minnesota side. Bennie paid his property taxes and obtained his car-license in Iowa, but kept the car in Minnesota. For many years a gnarled tree stump—with iron rings screwed in to serve as a hitching-post—marked the state line in front of the store.

Schwarzhoff, who also was postmaster during his residence here, employed one Hans Prestseter as his miller. He had learned the trade in his native Norway and was an expert millstone refinisher, which was a highly skilled art. After being used over and over again to grind wheat, the millstones had to be recut, and Prestseter was in great demand for refinishing them in all the mills in the area. While employed in Schwarzhoff's mill, he lost a hand and part of an arm in an accident. When Schwarzhoff moved out of Bee in the early 1890s, John Gunderson and Gustav Smerud became subsequent mill operators. After the dam was carried away by flood, Smerud installed a gasoline engine and ground stock feed. The mill was a familiar landmark in Bee until the early 1930s when it was razed.

Hans Morken and Hans Clauson secured Schwarzhoff's store. Clauson later sold it to Morken, who operated it until 1911 when he sold to a newly organized mercantile firm, with L. B. Olen as manager. On July 4, 1917 the business was purchased by Magnus Magnusson, and it stayed in that family until Ben Magnusson sold to his brother-in-law, Leonard Sadd, who after a short time closed it. Sadd and his wife, the former Christine Magnusson, still live at Bee. It was Magnus Magnusson—whose family became more intimately connected with Bee than any other—who received the national medal for quality butter. He earned the honor three times.

Magnus learned buttermaking from Professor T. L. Haecker, considered to be the founder of the cooperative creamery movement in Minnesota. Magnus entered the dairy school in 1892, held his first job as buttermaker at Strand, Minnesota, and in 1894 went to Bee, where the Honey Bee Farmer's Association, one of the first cooperatives in northeastern Iowa, was in the process of being organized. Local farmers purchased 300 shares valued at \$600 and began operation in a creamery building constructed by George Amray. Magnus is generally credited with much of the success of the Honey Bee Creamery, which continued in operation until the early 1940s, when many of the smaller creameries found it necessary to join with larger units. The butter was usually packed in wooden tubs containing 64 pounds, but for a time the Bee creamery capitalized on its name by selling butter directly to a firm in Philadelphia in 10-pound rolls called "Honey Bee Butter Rolls."

Magnusson was born in Folgerohavn near Bergen, Norway in 1869. When he was 17 he came to the United States, locating at Gary, Minnesota where his sister had immigrated earlier. He was a buttermaker for 31 years, his son Bennie assisting in later years. He continued operating the store at Bee until his death. He was succeeded as buttermaker by Ole Morken, Paul Pagel and Olaf Goodno.

In addition to the old store and four residences, all that remains of Bee today are blocks of old foundations, depressions in the ground where other buildings stood, and a beautiful

view of Waterloo Creek as it winds among the steep tree-covered bluffs from Wilmington Township in Houston County to Allamakee County in Iowa.

Those first Irish settlers were George Carver, who staked out a claim on the south side of the state line on the site of Bee, George Edgers, Michael Callahan, Charles Kelly and Michael Tanner. Edgers and Callahan sold to Ole Bye, believed to have been the first Norwegian settler in the area.

The first Scandinavians called the settlement Bergen from the Norwegian city by that name. The name Bee is of uncertain origin. One plausible theory is that it is derived from the Norwegian *By*, meaning hamlet or town, and that through some quirk of translation the village emerged as Bee.

Like most frontier villages Bee had its blacksmiths. Among them were Henry and Charles Peterson, sons of Hans Peterson, an early Spring Grove blacksmith, and John Akre, an expert smithy and wheelwright who moved to Spring Grove in 1913, bringing an end to the industry in Bee. Although small, the tiny village played its part in the development of the region, and only within the last year or two has it been left off the official highway maps of Minnesota.

# Stone Lady on the Hill Watches Over Tiny Black Hammer Village

On the east escarpment of a hill facing the highway in Section 34, Black Hammer Township, there is a unique landmark, built in the likeness of a woman, which has withstood time and the elements for at least 87 years.

To the residents of the area it has always been known as the “Lady on the Hill.” It is not known with certainty by whom or when it was built. One tradition is that it was built in 1878 by Valtin Valtinsen, an early settler on whose land it was located. Another story is that it was built by teenagers at an earlier date. A romantic belief is that there was at one time a statue of a man next to it, of which all traces are now gone, and that the lady will keep a lonely vigil on the hill until the return of her mate.

The hill on which the landmark is located is the most prominent feature of the landscape in the area, and the one from which the township got its name. The name Black Hammer is derived from the Norwegian words *sort*, meaning black, and *hammer*, which literally means a tool for pounding, but which was sometimes used in Norway when referring to a hill or knoll shaped like a hammer. According to early histories of the region it was so named by Knud Bergo, a pioneer in Section 6, Spring Grove Township, from whose cabin the hill was sharply silhouetted. The name was suggested to him by the charred appearance of the hill after a prairie fire. It reminded him of a hill in his home community in Valdres, Norway known as *Sort Hammer*.

From its commanding view in all directions and its location near the intersection of the famous Winona-Fort Atkinson Indian Trail which skirted it on the east, and an ancient trail that extended in an east-west direction between the Beaver and Riceford valleys, it appears that this hill was an observation post and a gathering place for Indians before the arrival of the white man. We can easily turn our fancy back to a time when dusky warriors kept surveillance over the nearby trails from this vantage spot.

In earlier years this hill was the scene of many celebrations, public picnics and bowery dances. The story has been told of how at one Fourth of July celebration a terrific storm came up late in the evening and people rushed pell-mell down to more sheltered places below the hill. One man who had carried the celebrating a little too far became entangled in a wire fence in his panic. He was found hanging upside down after the storm, none the worse for his ordeal—except his “hangover” the next day was a little more severe.

In the 1850s several changes were made in the township organization of Houston County. Some of the townships created the year before were reduced in size and a few new ones formed. One of these was Black Hammer. At an organizational meeting on April 5, 1859, Helge Solberg moved that the township should be named Clinton. For some reason this name was rejected. At a later meeting, after much deliberation, the name Black Hammer was formally adopted. Little information is available as to the adventurers, land prospectors, or speculators that may have visited the Black Hammer regions before the arrival of the first permanent settlers in 1853.

There is a story that an old trapper, who claimed to have roamed the Black Hammer and Yucatan regions before the territory of Minnesota was created in 1849, would at times when the weather was extreme call at some settler's cabin asking for food or shelter for the night. Who he was or where he came from is not known, for he never divulged his life story or his name. When asked his name he would reply, "Just say that Jim the Trapper made his rounds."

Probably the first to stake out a claim in the prairie part of the township was a millwright and speculator named Edwin Stevens. He was one of several millwrights known to have investigated the waterpower possibilities of the different streams in the county before the arrival of the first settlers. Stevens had come originally from Wisconsin but had spent some time in Winneshiek County, where he had assisted in designing and constructing some of the earliest grist mills in northeastern Iowa. In 1852, when on an exploration trip into Houston County in quest of a suitable mill site, he is supposed to have tarried long enough in what is now Black Hammer Township to stake out a claim in Section 21, now the Arnold Walhus farm, and to have made the other improvements on the claim as required by law of those intending to retain preemption rights to government land.

While his later activities in Houston County are outside of the story of Black Hammer, we mention that Stevens traveled on to Yucatan, where he staked out a claim in Section 23, later the site of the Hiram Howe mill. In 1856, when town-site speculation was becoming almost epidemic, he platted the village of Yucatan and built a saw-mill there. After the Money Panic of 1857, when town lots became almost worthless, he vanished from Houston County history. It is reported that he went back to Winneshiek County where he for a time continued in his profession as a millwright and then joined a caravan of emigrants on their way westward to Worth County, Iowa.

Riceford Creek flows through the western tier of the township. By the late 1850s a few settlers had drifted down the Riceford and established themselves along the creek in Section 29. As our information is limited in that part of the township it is not known when David

Soper began construction of a saw-mill at this point. It is probable that he was in partnership with Philander Soper, a resident of Riceford, and that both had been connected with a saw-mill at Riceford. Early histories of the region state that it was in operation by 1857, and that like the other primitive saw-mills in the area it had a reciprocating saw-blade which, while slow and cumbersome to operate, could turn out rough boards with the minimum amount of waterpower. This blade appears to have required less engineering ingenuity to build. The mill was in operation until the fall of 1866, when it was destroyed by a flood.

A few residences had sprung up in the vicinity of the mill, evidently homes of employees in the mill. Among them were John McCabe, Gunerious Tannen and Mathias Nilsen. McCabe was among those from Black Hammer Township who paid the supreme sacrifice in the Civil War. Mathias Nilsen is best remembered from his curious nickname of "Mathias with the Fork." The reason for this name was that he never ventured forth after dark without carrying a pitchfork. Whether he carried this to ward off rattlesnakes or he suspected some Indian lurking around—they were still common along Riceford Valley—or he was affected by nyctalopia, is not known.

Tragedy struck the colony on the night of August 6, 1866, when the most devastating flood ever to strike the Riceford and South Fork valleys occurred. This flood carried away the mill and all the homes, except that of the Tannen family. As the wall of water surged down the valley in the middle of the night without warning, not all the residents had time to flee to higher ground. Mrs. McCabe and her two children, with their home, were carried down the stream and drowned. The mill and homes were never rebuilt. The Tannen family continued to live there until the 1890s.

The population of Black Hammer has always been predominantly Norwegian. The rugged terrain of many parts of the township seems to have had a special appeal to immigrants from the hills and valleys of Norway. The influx of Norwegians into the area started in 1853. It appears to have been a continuation of a movement of settlers fanning out from the Norwegian settlements started in Allamakee and Winneshiek counties in 1850-51, which reached Spring Grove and Wilmington townships in 1852, and finally Black Hammer. The arrival of Norwegians continued at an accelerated pace until the late 1860s, when we find them ensconced in almost every nook and valley in the township.

Probably the first upon the scene was Torkel Aageson Rosaaen from Stavanger, Norway, who established himself in Section 22 in 1853. He was closely followed by another family from Stavanger, Knud Olsen Ike, his wife Cecelia and five children. They settled in Section 21, on the claim staked out by Edwin Stevens the year before. It is not known whether

Stevens had abandoned the claim or Mr. Ike was tricked or intimidated into paying him for what dishonest speculators termed their preemption rights.

Later that year came a group of settlers from Sogn, Norway, and Aurland, an annex of Sogn. Among these were Jens Winjum, Jens and Guttorm Otterness, Kristopher Eriksen, Per Onstad, Lars Findreng, Ole Yitrelie, Ole Hemri, Halvor Lie, and the Berquam brothers, Johannes the elder, Johannes the younger, Bottolf, Ole and Iver. During the next decade more immigrants from Sogn continued to arrive. Because many came from this section of Norway, the very musical and rhythmic dialect of the Sognings came to be very much in evidence whenever a group of Black Hammer settlers gathered in the early days.

While no attempt can here be made to name all who did their part in the building up of the township, we can mention a few from other sections of Norway who came before the close of the 1850s: Valtin Valtinsen, Knud Guttormsen, Christian Lamén, Lars Svartaas, Tosten Johnson Lommen, Helge Bergsrud, Helge Bjore, Helge Solberg, Halvor Olsen, Ole W. Olson, Elling Bjertness, Torjus Eiken, Osten Burtness, Elling Holum and Nils Ekse.

Among people of other nationalities than Norwegian who were early settlers in the township were Julius Billings, Elijah West, Alexander Simpson, Peter, Silas and William Carrier, Chandler Flemming, Alvin Smith and John Birdsell. Billings, West and Birdsell are known to have been prominent in township, county and state political affairs. Carrier died at Fort Snelling while serving in the Civil War. Flemming and Smith were among those from the township who gave their lives in the war.

The village of Black Hammer is located a mile north of the bluff, which we have already described, and dates from the late 1860s. Unlike most of the small hamlets in the region started in the 1850s when town-site speculation was at its peak, Black Hammer appears to have come into existence from the necessity of having a post-office and a place to shop within the community. Unlike towns started by town-site speculators, it never had any aspiration of growing into a metropolis, nor can it boast of having had any boom days or days of decline, but seems to have clung tenaciously onto life until the present day. Not even the proposed Houston, Hesper and Southwestern Railroad, surveyed across the township in the 1880s, seems to have caused much of a stir or done anything to draw prospective businessmen.

The village has at the present time one store, one church, four residences and a population of 10 persons. The Black Hammer store is one of the few remaining country stores in the county. While the pot-bellied stove, the cracker-barrel and the "Poor Box"—where customers filled their pipes at the storekeeper's expense—are gone, cronies still gather there in the evening to swap stories, reminisce over the past, or review the day's happenings.

When the first business establishment was started in Black Hammer is not known with certainty. We do know that by 1871 mail-stages on the Houston-Decorah route by way of Riceford were going through the town and that a post-office had been started there that year, with Gunder Mathison holding the keys to the mail-pouches. It is also known that by that year he was operating a store and a blacksmith shop. It is probable that he may have started the store in the late 1860s. About 1873 the property came into the hands of Bernt Hanson. He was a blacksmith by trade and while working at this he also kept the store going.

In the late 1880s the store was purchased by Thron Jacobson, a thrifty man who believed in the saying, "A penny saved is a penny made." The story is told of how before becoming a storekeeper himself, he once carried a basket of eggs to Spring Grove. On arriving there he found out that the stores in Caledonia were paying a cent more per dozen, so he trudged on to Caledonia with his eggs, making a round trip of over 20 miles before he got home. His business is reported to have been on a rather modest scale. It has been told that he sometimes carried from Spring Grove enough goods on his back to replenish his stock from the prior week's sales. In 1895 he leased out the store to Peter Glasrud. After a year he found time hanging on his hands so he went back into the store and kept it going until 1913, when it went out of existence.

In the late 1890s the blacksmith shop operated by Hanson came into the hands of Henry Peterson of Spring Grove, who started a wagon maker's shop and kept the forge going. Sometime in the late 1880s a second store was started in Black Hammer by Hans Hanson, a brother of Bernt Hanson and Erik Karlsbraaten. Karlsbraaten seems to have been a silent partner in the venture who soon sold, and Hans Hanson kept it going until 1903 when he sold out to Oscar Bagley.

Before coming to Black Hammer, Bagley had operated a store at Newburg until 1952 when his health began to fail. It was then taken over by his son, Milton, who carried on the business until his father's death in 1955. It was then sold to Sigurd Evenson, the present operator. In his many years as a merchant Bagley saw many changes in the store business—from the horse-and-buggy days when he had to haul all his goods from Spring Grove by wagon, to the time that trucks delivered the merchandise to his door. In early days many items were sold by bulk and had to be laboriously weighed by hand. Bagley, who for almost half a century operated the store in Black Hammer, was probably the most well-known country storekeeper in this part of the country.

The present brick church in Black Hammer was built in 1898 to replace a smaller wood building erected in 1868. The history of the Lutheran congregation at Black Hammer dates

back to the early days of the settlement when the spiritual needs of the settlers were administered to by occasional visits from such missionaries of the Norwegian Synod as the Revs. V. Koren, Nils Brandt and F. C. Clausen, the first regular pastor at Spring Grove.

The congregation was organized in 1858 at the home of Knud Ike. It was affiliated with Spring Grove until 1895, when the charge was divided and Black Hammer, Riceford and Newburg called a pastor of their own. From 1857 to 1870 the congregation was served by Rev. Clausen at Spring Grove. After his death the Rev. S. S. Reque was called to Spring Grove, and he continued to serve Black Hammer until the charge was divided.

During Rev. Reque's ministry the congregation decided the call was too large for one man. An assistant, the Rev. R. R. Larson was called in 1876, but his service was short for he died two years later. The Rev. Eskild Jensen was next called as assistant to Rev. Reque. He served until 1895, when he became regular pastor to the Black Hammer, Riceford and Newburg congregations and served until his death in 1905.

The following pastors have served since that time: Rev. Carl Kasberg, 1905-1912; Rev. Hemming Hanson Frost, 1912-1927; Rev. Borg Breen, 1927-1949; Rev. Obert Rust, 1949-1955; Rev. Paul Reque, 1955-1958; Rev. Richard Johnson, 1958-1961; Rev. Vernon Aaes, 1961-1965; and the Rev. Jesse Thompson, 1965-present.

And so reads the story of the progressive, prosperous, and civic-minded community of Black Hammer. The village of Black Hammer appears lately to have taken on a new lease of life with the building of a large parsonage with Sunday school rooms and several new homes. Whatever the future of the village, the "Lady on the Hill" will keep her lonely vigil on the crest of the bluff for many years to come.

The farm on which the landmark stands now is owned by Mr. and Mrs. James Evenson. Their home is not much more than a stone's throw from the bluff. Mrs. Evenson, the former Iola Ike, is the daughter of the late Martin Ike, who for many years owned the farm. He was a lifetime resident of Black Hammer and was much interested in the history of the community. Mr. Ike often told how when he arose early the landmark would come into view through the morning mist, and at sundown it would be outlined in the western sky.

# Newhouse Just Withered Away

## The Speculators Sold Out Fast

You won't find Newhouse in the U.S. Official Postal Guide any more, but you'll find Newhouse on Minnesota road maps. This once thriving village with its railroad station and elevator—a marketing point for miles around—now consists of an old store building, converted to a tavern, and two residences. It's about halfway between Spring Grove and Mabel, 1½ miles north of the Iowa state line in Section 29, Spring Grove Township.

The village of Newhouse was created in 1879 when the Caledonia, Mississippi & Western Railroad Company came through and built a station and grain elevator on the farm of Tollef Newhouse. It was first known as Newport, probably from Leander Newport, a well-known Dubuque, Iowa land speculator whose name is found on many land abstracts in Houston County, particularly in the southwestern part. Later the name was changed to Newhouse in honor of the man on whose land the station stood. It originally belonged to Francis Aiken, one of a group of English speculators. He came into possession of much land in this area in 1854.

Unlike more rugged land in other parts of the township, which by the end of 1853 had been preempted by Norwegian home seekers, the prairie land surrounding Newhouse seems to have been especially attractive to speculators. When the first public lands went on sale by the Root River District land-office at Brownsville in 1854, much unattached land fell into the hands of Brownsville real-estate men and others hanging around the land-offices for cheap government land.

Much of it stayed in the hands of speculators until the depression that followed the Money Panic of 1857, when they frantically tried to sell at any price. By the early 1860s most of this land had reverted to honest toilers of the soil. Such names as Adam Kjun, Abijah Lamb, John Montgomery, Simon Waller, Benjamin Richards, Leander Newport, Burt Lewis and Francis and Samuel Aiken disappeared from the records.

As Newhouse was near the Winona-Fort Atkinson Indian Trail and near hunting trails leading into Riceford Valley, early settlers spoke of much Indian activity in the region. Along the main trail there were long caravans of Indians with all their belongings as they moved between former camp grounds along the Iowa and Root rivers.

As told by Johannes Hallan, an early settler living near the main trail, an Indian tapped at his door one blustery night and begged shelter; his wife was not feeling well. During the

night Mrs. Hallan assisted in the birth of a papoose. The next day the squaw was well enough so they could continue on their way; she, of course, had another precious burden on her back.

Although last to be occupied by permanent settlers, Riceford Creek was first to be explored for water-power possibilities. Early accounts say millwrights from Iowa explored Riceford Valley as early as 1850.

Riceford Creek, in its meandering course through western Spring Grove Township, comes to within 1½ miles of Newhouse. Early Houston County histories say that in 1851 William Banning had established a primitive grist-mill along the creek, and by the summer of 1852 had dammed the creek. When it began operation is not known, but it was said to be the only mill within a wide area patronized by both Indians and whites.

As the mill was so primitive it was the butt of many jokes. One story was that mice devoured the grist as fast as it was ground; another said that a shovel-full of wheat thrown into the hopper at one time would bring the whole contrivance to a standstill.

The date when it ceased operation is unknown, but later it became the property of another man interested in milling, William Rowe. He and his son-in-law, Taylor Beeby, dismantled it and used the salvageable parts to build a mill at the mouth of Crystal Creek north of Riceford.

The McMichaels brothers—Tom, Alec and George—of Brownsville leased the elevator built by the railroad at Newhouse. Originally from Scotland, they immigrated to Canada in the early 1850s, moved to McGregor, Iowa where they bought wheat and other farm produce, and moved to Brownsville in 1860 where they established a grain buying firm.

When Brownsville began to decline as a marketing center with the coming of the railroads in the 1870s, the McMicheals, all shrewd businessmen, contracted with the Caledonia, Mississippi and Western Railroad for the lease of all their elevators along the Reno-Preston line. When wheat-raising in this area came to an end in the late 1880s, they sold out their interest in the various towns to local residents. Their elevator at Newhouse was operated by Peter Newhouse, P. B. Passmour and Eddie Foss in that order.

It next came into the hands of the Milwaukee Elevator Company, which specialized in malting barley and encouraged farmers in the area to raise barley. As they paid a premium price for good quality, they did a large volume of business. Reports are that when prices were high, long lines of wagons would be waiting to unload.

About 1920 the Milwaukee company leased the elevator to local farmers who operated it as a feed and seed store. When they went out of business a short time later the elevator was purchased by Johnson & Tollefson, of Mabel. Ole Lee, who bought and sold grain and seeds and purchased wool, was the next owner. After his death it was continued by his son, Orlando Lee, until 1944, when the building was razed.

The first store in Newhouse was started by a firm known as Johnson & Halvorson. When they started it, or how long they continued in business, is not known. It next came into the hands of Ellef Tollefson, merchant from Mabel who operated it as a branch from his store at Mabel. Tollefson earlier had a store at Riceford but when the railroad in 1879 bypassed the village, leaving it without a future, he moved to Mabel, which was just coming to life a few miles west of Newhouse. After a short time he sold his store at Newhouse to Frank Everett and withdrew to concentrate his efforts on his Mabel interests. Everett sold to John Lien, who in 1892 sold to Ole Lee.

In 1890 Joseph Jetson and Andrew J. Hallan built and opened a general store in Newhouse. It was east of the present highway, running north and south, a section of the village from which all traces now are gone. The firm sold in 1895 to competitor Lee, who moved the building against his own store and remodeled it into more commodious quarters.

It appears that the period of greatest activity in Newhouse was during the 1890s. Sometime in this decade Andrew Peterson Mokasten started a restaurant. Also a barber, he increased his income by cutting hair and trimming whiskers. His restaurant business probably wasn't too rushing. After he went out of business, a second restaurant was ventured by Otto Myten. After a short struggle, he also closed the doors. His brother, Even, operated a shoe repair shop, and Hans Ellingson made and sold harnesses.

While the village chestnut tree probably was missing and there were few children to watch the sparks fly, John Hallan for a number of years kept a blacksmith's forge going. Besides shoeing horses and forging plowshares, John was an ingenious mechanic and was much in demand for repairing farm machinery. Before harvest his place was lined with reapers and threshing machines to be overhauled. In partnership with Albert Hallan he operated a feed mill.

In the early 1890s a lumberyard was started by Ole Roppe and Hans Quanrud of Spring Grove, with Julius Dvergsten as manager. They sold in a couple of years to Martin Storlie and Peter Newhouse, also from Spring Grove. By 1900 this firm also had gone out of business.

Farmer's Alliance, a political movement active in the state in the 1890s that established cooperative stores, elevators, implement agencies and shipping associations, maintained a livestock shipping association and office at Newhouse. As this branch was made up of members from Spring Grove, Black Hammer, Wilmington, Newburg and other nearby communities, the volume of business was large until the Alliance went out of existence in this area in 1907. Its warehouse was purchased by Ole Lee.

The last farmer's organization to operate here was Farmer's Equity Company. It began operation about 1918 and continued in business until the late 1930s, when trucking largely superseded railroad transportation in this area. Meanwhile, hundreds of cars of livestock were loaded here every year, and thousands of pounds of butter from the Rock Springs and Highlandville creameries just south of the Iowa line were shipped annually from Newhouse. A post-office was established here soon after the railroad was completed in 1879. O. B. Nelson, Ole Newhouse, Andrew Hallan, Ole and Orlando Lee were postmasters.

A complete list of station-agents is not available, but among them were: O. B. Nelson, later a hardware man; Oscar Hallan, later a banker; and Peter Newhouse, a lumberman. All of them, along with Andrew Hallan, eventually went to Spring Grove. From 1896 to 1910 Eddie Foss was station agent. While not on duty he and his brother Albert bought grain at the elevator. From 1910 to his death in 1955 Eddie had the Ford agency in Spring Grove.

Ole Lee, carrying on his mercantile business for 35 years, kept the village alive many years after all other enterprises had gone out of business. He probably had been employed at the John Lien store before purchasing the building in 1892 and starting out on his own. He conducted the store until his death in 1927.

His stock of goods ranged from groceries to dry-goods and hardware. For many years his was the best stocked country store in a wide area. His son, Orlando, continued the business until retiring in 1946. Ole also sold farm implements and carriages. When self-propelled vehicles became common, he discontinued selling buggies and surreys.

When the Farmer's Alliance left, Lee bought and sold grain, clover, timothy, alfalfa and other farms seeds and purchased wool, storing it in the former Alliance warehouse together with fencing and other bulky hardware. No one is better remembered in connection with Newhouse than the genial Ole Lee, who greeted customers for over three decades from behind the counter of this well-known country store.

It was purchased in 1946 by Ralph Ardinger, who opened a tavern and club. His wife continued operating it following his death. She later married Edward Prolow, and they are

the present proprietors. Ole left three children: Cyrus, a monument salesman in Spring Grove; Orlando, of Lanesboro; and Mrs. Clarence Larson, of rural Lanesboro.

In early years when it was more difficult to get around, local dances and weddings lasted up to three days. The broader community events were Fourth of July celebrations, and for the Scandinavians, the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, Norway's independence day. Orations, picnic dinners, fireworks and merrymaking characterized them.

In the Newhouse area most of the large public gatherings were held on a wooded knoll northeast of the village on the Jens Jacobson Olstad place, now the Ove Junior Fossum farm. A news item in the *Spring Grove Posten*, a Norwegian weekly published there in the early 1880s, reported a lively "Syttende Mai Fest." A homemade cannon exploded, sending shrapnel into the crowd, but luckily no one was seriously injured.

Thus reads the story of Newhouse. While trains no longer stop here for the locomotives to build up steam pressure before beginning their long hard pull up the steep grade toward Spring Grove, and stops are no longer made to unload goods or hook on cars of livestock, approaching diesels still wail their station signals and warning bells still jangle as they pass the site of what was at the turn of the century the thriving shopping center of Newhouse.

# Remains and History of a Once Blooming Village

Along Riceford Creek in Spring Grove Township, and extending across the line into Fillmore County, are a few old residences, a church, a store building and an old forgotten cemetery—all that is left of a flourishing town that in the 1860s threatened to outgrow all the other inland villages in Houston County.

Not much is known of Riceford before 1856, when Jobe Brown, a speculator from Brownsville, moved in and platted the village. We know that William Van Doren had preempted the land on which Riceford was built, and that by 1855 a sufficient number of settlers had congregated to warrant the establishment of a post-office. Van Doren by that year had a store going, and there was a crude saw-mill was in operation.

Jobe Brown was a reckless adventurer and shrewd town-site promoter who had arrived in 1848 on the site of Brownsville, a town that bears his name. Before coming to Houston County he had been a soldier in the Mexican War and worked in the lead-mines at Galena, Illinois. After he and his brother Charles, a man of more retiring nature, had platted and started several enterprises in Brownsville, they sold out and moved to Riceford. It was probably the financial success of their efforts there that prompted them to try again their fortune by promoting another town-site, a form of speculation that in the boom days of the middle 1850s was both alluring and profitable.

The origin of the name Riceford is a matter of conjecture. An early history of Houston County says the name was conferred upon the settlement after Henry Mower Rice, a territorial delegate to Congress from Minnesota, had visited the locality in the early 1850s, arriving by crossing the stream on an Indian trail. There is also some evidence that Rice may have had a trading post at this point in the 1840s when he was associated with the Winnebago fur trade, and that the place was then known as Rice's Ford, later shortened to Riceford.

Jobe Brown saw to it that the town he was promoting was duly advertised. A newspaper, *The Southern Minnesota Herald*, published in Brownsville, spoke in glowing terms of the business opportunities in Riceford. Jobe was a stockholder and Charles, for a time, editor. A pamphlet, *The Advantages and Resources of Houston County*, published in Hokah in 1858, called attention to the unlimited waterpower that could be developed at Riceford. In a series called "Sketches of Western Towns," which began appearing in the *Dubuque Express*

*Herald* in 1857, Riceford was described as a rapidly-growing and flourishing town in the interior. Jobe, who in the 1860s was the most important stage-line operator in southeastern Minnesota, arranged that Riceford didn't lack transportation. From 1856 to the end of the era of stage coaching, passenger and mail lines served the village.

The town of Riceford as platted and envisioned by Brown was a pretentious city with several streets running east and west and north and south and plenty of room for expansion. There was also a suburb known as South Riceford. This was to take care of the hordes of settlers expected who could not possibly find room in the main section of town. We can mention here that the population of Riceford never reached such proportions that it became necessary to move into the suburbs. The few residences built in South Riceford were soon razed. As was the custom among town-site promoters, a map skillfully and artistically lithographed was published. How much this contributed to luring people to the metropolis is not known, but by the end of 1856 Jobe had sold lots to about a dozen prospective businessmen.

A mill was built by Jobe at the close of 1857. It was the only mill of any consequence along Riceford Valley. Two stores were started by Charles Brown and William Birdsell. Orin Chatfield had a crude saw-mill in operation, with a reciprocating blade that turned out rough boards, neither edged nor trimmed. This mill probably had been in operation since 1854.

As stage-coaches were already clattering through the village along the Elliota-Brownsville territorial road and travelers were numerous, a hotel, the Barker House, was opened by Lewis Barker. A blacksmith shop was started by William Bradford. John Craig, a dealer in Manny's farm implements, had his headquarters there. Located here also was Elsie Aiken, a canvasser of books and stationary. A schoolhouse and a dozen homes had been built, and lime kilns and stone quarries were in operation.

Brown's Mill, or what was commonly known as the Upper Mill, was a three-story structure. It was powered by an imposing dam creating a pond that reached half a mile up the valley. The mill was designed and built by Luther Preston, one of the foremost millwrights in southeastern Minnesota. Much of the actual construction was done by John Munns, another millwright who had had much experience in mill construction.

Luther Preston designed the Troy Mill in Winona County, the Kaercher Mill and woolen factory at Preston, and several mills in the Chatfield and Rochester area. Preston was named in honor of this famous millwright.

Brown's Mill at Riceford frequently changed ownership. It was successively in the hands of Edward Thompson, a miller from Hokah, Taylor Beeby, and Michael Bernatz, who in turn transferred to his sons, Anthony and George. Michael Bernatz was a descendant from a famous milling family in Bavaria, Germany. He later became well-known in the milling industry in northeastern Iowa.

In 1875 the mill was sold to Henry Oatman and Charles Luttman, a firm which operated under the name Oatman & Company. While in their hands the motive power was changed from water to steam. Some time in the early 1890s the mill was sold to Herbert Strong and George Hartman. After operating it for a short time it was destroyed by fire, presumably by sparks from the steam-boiler.

There are conflicting claims as to when the mill fire in Riceford took place. There is a tradition that it was destroyed about the time Admiral Dewey bombarded and captured Manila in the Spanish American War. The story is that Sven Ellestad, a businessman at Spring Grove, had a billboard in front of his store where he posted news items heard over the telephone. On the morning after the fire he had posted in bold letters, "The mill at Riceford was destroyed by the Spaniards last night." Others claim it was destroyed in 1895.

U. S. Census records show that by 1860 many professional men and skilled laborers had moved into Riceford. Among those listed were: Burtron Andrews, a lawyer, and Dr. Frank King, a physician. Andrews later moved to Caledonia where he was for some years engaged in law practice. No other information is available concerning Dr. King, where he came from or how long he stayed in Riceford. Also listed are: Almon Mosher, A. Crompton and Jackson Hanny, carpenters; Allan Wilson and Robert Gilmore, stone-masons. A wagon-maker's shop had been opened by Martin Colt and there were evidently several assistants employed in the various industries.

The decade of 1860-70 saw several new enterprises started in Riceford. One of these was the Sherwood foundry. Daniel Sherwood came originally from New York. He had learned the molder's trade in the railroad shops at Hokah. In 1869 he came to Riceford and started a foundry. For some years it was, next to the milling industry, the most important business in the village. It had a cupola-type, charcoal-burning furnace. The castings were cleaned and polished in a barrel-like container filled with sand, which was rotated by horsepower. It was said the clattering of this contrivance could be heard for miles. The castings made at Riceford showed excellent workmanship. There are still articles in use made by Sherwood.

In 1869 a second mill began operation in Riceford. It was named the Crystal Mill, as it was located near the junction of Crystal and Riceford creeks, right north of the village. It

was built by William Rowe, who had earlier operated the Banning mill farther up Riceford Valley. It was run by Taylor Beeby, a son-in-law of Rowe. Like all the early mills, it had its many vicissitudes before it finally went out of existence in the middle 1890s when a flood carried away the dam.

About 1865, William Hinkley, a tavern keeper and merchant from Spring Grove, moved to Riceford. Not much is known of his activities there except that he seems to have speculated in real-estate and probably operated a store. It is evident he was unable to sell all the land he had invested in, for there are still a few lots along the creek in Hinkley's name.

The boom days of Riceford lasted until the late 1870s, when several reverses began shaping up which gave the *coup de grace* to the town. Records show that several enterprises were started and more professional men moved in after 1875, but the frequent changes of ownership and personnel indicated that the town had seen its best days.

In 1876, a general store was opened by Ellef Tollefsen, who had earlier been a merchant in Newburg. When the railroad bypassed Riceford in 1879 he packed up his goods, sawed his buildings into sections and moved everything to Mabel, a few miles to the southwest.

A restaurant, pool hall and photograph shop were started by Even Hoime. Two more blacksmith shops were opened by John Thompson and William Sherburne. Listed in the census records are: Edward Coffee, Issac Jackson, Mr. Rigs, Orson Bagley and George Wilcox, all giving their occupation as blacksmiths. Listed as running boarding-houses were Henry Oatman and Mrs. Orson Bagley. A hotel was owned by John Thompson. A saloon had been started by C. Reynolds, but as he was converted at a revival meeting he never again sold a drop of liquor.

A shoe-shop and harness-maker's shop were started by Steingrim Gullingsrud. Employed at this shop was an expert harness and saddle-maker from Norway, Christian Espelund. It has been told of Mr. Gullingsrud that when asked how he made horse-collars to fit, he laconically replied, "I make them after my own neck." Toward his last years here he also operated a general store in the front part of his building.

Other enterprises in Riceford, of which no information seems to be available, were a shoe-shop operated by J. A. Dahl and a tailor-shop by Andrew Gilbertson. Watch repairing in the community was attended to by David Randall and Gulbrand Gilbertson.

In 1878 Dr. George Nye began practicing medicine in Riceford. After about two years he moved to Caledonia. Dr. Nye seems to have been of a roving nature. He had started practicing in Papillion, Nebraska in 1848 and had been located in New Albin and Newburg before coming here. While in Newburg he purchased and operated a hotel known as the

Valder House. It was said that what he lacked in medical proficiency he made up in the formality of his attire. Dr. Nye was fastidious about his dress. Even when calling on the sick he was never seen without his frock coat and high silk hat, a garb that was not well-suited for walking cross-country in tangled underbrush and over rail-fences—his coat-tails were torn beyond repair. Dr. Nye’s medical knowledge probably didn’t go much beyond the giving of pills and the administering of a few herbs, for he was nicknamed “The Pill Doctor.”

As the milling of wheat was one of the main industries in Riceford, the end of the era of wheat-raising was a serious setback to the town. While adverse weather conditions and the chinch bug have been blamed for the decline in wheat production, the main reason was probably depletion in fertility of the soil. Farmers were faced to turn to diversified farming such as stock-raising. As Riceford was without water and rail transportation, it could in no way reap any benefit from this great economic change.

The other great setback to Riceford was the coming of railroad transportation. When the Reno-Preston railroad was built across Houston County in 1879, it bypassed the village, and most of the businessmen in Riceford were quick to realize that a town left stranded without rail service held no hope for the future, so they left for more promising fields.

The coming of the railroads brought an end to the days of stage-coaching. As Riceford had been an important stop on the Brownsville-Elliota territorial road, it had been a place of much bustle and activity in occupations that went with such travel, namely hotels, coach-repair shops, livery stables and blacksmithing.

By the late 1890s Riceford business had dwindled to two stores and one mill, the Crystal, and this had gone into the grinding of stock-feed and the making of sorghum syrup. A store started by Tone & Roen in 1867 had in turn passed into the hands of John Rank, Peter Rank and Christ Christophersen. In 1894 Christophersen erected a new building and carried on the business until 1898 when he sold to Herman Loing, who operated it until his death in 1940.

His son, Harry Loing, carried on the business until 1956 when competition from the larger nearby towns became too great. The small store operated by Steingrim Gullingsrud went out of existence in the late 1890s, and the post-office was closed in 1902 when rural postal service was started from Mabel.

Little is known of the early church history of Riceford. As early as 1853 the Riceford area was a missionary field for the Methodists. By 1854 circuit riders were conducting meetings there. Among the early Methodist missionaries to preach here was Benjamin Crist, David Wing, Hans Valder and John Dyer. It is known that the Quakers, who were active in

the Hesper, Iowa region south of Riceford, had some adherents in and around Riceford. It is probable also that the Reverend E. M. Rice, a zealous missionary in the Presbyterian Church whose activities extended over all of Houston County in 1859-63, may have been in Riceford.

In 1866, itinerant exhorters of Seventh Day Adventism began holding meetings in the Riceford region. Three men from the area became active preachers in this faith: George Wilcox, Taylor Beeby, and Jobe Brown. Beeby, the head miller and later owner of the Crystal Mill, probably was the most colorful and unforgettable character in the history of Riceford. With his long white beard and hair reaching to his shoulders, he made a deep impression on his audiences as he preached and baptized converts in Riceford Creek.

He went so far in his religious fervor as to claim he had seen visions about the end of the Gospel Age and the final destruction of the earth. In 1887 he began publishing a periodical called *The Revelator*, in which he tried to describe his visions and his strange and remarkable formula in arriving at the date of the end of the world. The publication, known little outside the confines of Riceford, went out of existence before the end of the year. Jobe Brown, the adventurer, first was converted to Methodism by Benjamin Crist but, after coming under the influence of Adventism, left this denomination and began preaching the new doctrine.

Information concerning the Catholic Church in Riceford is scant. It is known that Father Pendergast of Winona had a circuit of six appointments in Houston County in 1854, and Riceford may have been one of them. It is probable that the few settlers of Catholic faith in the Riceford area attended services conducted by Father Pendergast at different homes on Preble Ridge northwest of the village.

Although missionaries of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod had been ministering to the Scandinavian settlers west of the Mississippi since 1851, the field was so large that probably it was not before 1855 that the Reverend N. Brandt, the first missionary of this church body, was able to contact the Norwegian settlers in the Riceford region. When the Lutheran congregation was organized in Spring Grove in 1855, Lutherans joined this congregation. In 1875 they formed a parish of their own and in 1877 erected a church, the only one ever built in Riceford.

Riceford residents in the early days were noted for their obstreperous Saturday night social gatherings and for exciting and patriotic Fourth of July celebrations. Especially fierce were the encounters between the Norwegian and Irish who lived on Irish Ridge, near Riceford in Preble Township, Fillmore County.

This feud is said to have come to a climax at a free-for-all at a Saturday night dance when the tide of battle reportedly turned in favor of the Norsemen after a brawler from Black Hammer had entered the fray and incapacitated some of the Irish by clubbing them on the head with a cudgel fashioned from a sapling.

Fourth of July was generally celebrated with appropriate speeches and the usual noise-making and fanfare. As a grand finale to these celebrations it was customary to set off huge explosions. The common way of doing this was to set two blacksmith anvils on top of each other with a charge of gun-powder between. This was ignited by setting fire to a trail of powder strewn to a safe distance.

The story has been told that one of these explosions went off prematurely and one man had his whiskers and mustache singed off, but this didn't prevent him from being the prize fiddler at the dance that evening. At the Fourth of July celebration in 1868, such an explosion is said to have carried away the arm and part of the face of another.

There are two cemeteries in Riceford. One is in the yard of the Lutheran church, where the members of the Riceford congregation are buried. In a hillside to the southwest of the village some of Riceford's earliest settlers of non-Norwegian nationality are buried. Here on broken shafts of marble, with inscriptions now worn by time as to be almost unintelligible, are the names of many men and their families who were connected with the early history of the locality.

Thus reads the story of Riceford, a town started during the time that town-site speculation was at its height, a town that weathered the panic of 1857 and which, for over two decades, was the most prosperous inland town in Houston and Fillmore counties.

# Trails, Villages Can Still Be Found

An old Indian trail, over which mail was carried from Fort Crawford, Wisconsin to Fort Snelling, Minnesota in the late 1820s and early 1830s, may have passed through the now abandoned village of Wilmington Grove in Wilmington Township southeast of Spring Grove, southwest of Caledonia and northwest of Eitzen.

Although the trail now is obliterated, histories indicate that Major Long's scientific expedition of 1823 set out in a northwesterly direction from the mouth of the Yellow River, in Iowa Territory and across present Allamakee County into Minnesota. It is probable that the expedition passed through Wilmington and Portland Prairie (named after New Portland Prairie, Maine), and then on to Rushford in the Root River Valley. For the first settlers this was the easiest route into Minnesota Territory.

Reverend Neill's history of Houston County says that the vanguard of settlers into Wilmington was a widow named Mrs. James Robinson and her four sons, who arrived from Columbia County, Wisconsin in 1851. The following year three Callahan brothers, Charles Kelly and Michael Tanner, all natives of Ireland, settled nearby on Waterloo Creek at the nearby state line.

Gjermund Lommen, the grandfather of Miss Georgina Lommen, an 89-year-old resident of Caledonia, was the first Norwegian settler in Wilmington Township according to the late O. S. Johnson, a historian of the Spring Grove, Black Hammer and Wilmington areas. He arrived in 1853.

That same year Ole Bye, also a familiar name in the area, arrived from Norway and purchased the claims of the Irishmen, and Knud Haugen secured from the U. S. government the land which was named Bergen, later shortened to Bee. The year 1854 saw an influx of Yankees from Rhode Island to this area, among them Dr. Alexander Batchellor, one of the early doctors in Houston County.

Two years later a mail-route was established between Brownsville, Minnesota and Dorchester, Iowa, with post-offices at Crooked Creek (later called Reno), Winnebago Valley and Portland Prairie. Neill's history says that Dr. Batchellor of Portland Prairie first held the keys to the mail-pouches, and Knud Dahle carried the mail on his back to a cluster of cabins near a spring to the south that was called Nittedal from a locality in Norway by that name.

When the post-office was moved to Nittedal, much confusion resulted as there was a town farther upstate by that name. The name Buffalo was suggested, but this also was a

duplication, so the settlement became known as Wilmington Grove. To most of the settlers it was simply referred to as the Grove. Scandinavians called it *Grona*.

Wilmington Grove was founded in about 1860 by settlers who clustered there because of its water supply. At the time of the first settlements the only available water supply for persons and stock came from springs. The first enterprise here, the Crystal Springs Creamery, was started by Andrew Dahle and Erik Stenrodden in 1888. Jacob Eide, who learned butter-making at Rushford and Quandahl, purchased it in 1894 and sold to a group of farmers in 1904. They operated it as a cooperative, erecting a new building in 1924. It closed in 1950.

Ole Haugen opened a store in 1889 and was also postmaster. Butter-maker Eide, the most enterprising businessman in town, promptly built another general store and proceeded to buy out his competitor, moving it next to his own place for more commodious quarters. He also fell heir to the postmastership. Olaus Hefte, former Sheldon storekeeper, became deputy postmaster to Mr. Eide and later purchased a share in his store. This arrangement was short-lived. Eide next took as partner Olaus Burtness, one of his clerks. This partnership lasted until 1900.

In the summer of 1901 the store burned to the ground in a terrific thunderstorm. Eide built another, continued the business until 1905, sold to Henry Wermager, and moved to North Dakota. Wermager sold to Theodore Newhouse after a few years. Newhouse in turn sold to Louis B. Oleson, who closed shop in 1935. The history of storekeeping in Wilmington wasn't quite over, however. Maurice Vick, of Spring Grove, reopened the shop in 1940, but after operating it a year was called into the armed services. The building was dismantled.

Like most ghost towns, Wilmington Grove had several enterprises that were in existence for a short time. One of them was a poultry-dressing plant started by Eide and Burtness. Another was a feed-mill started by Eide. Both used the steam from the boiler at the creamery for hot water and power. Martin Quinnell kept the feed-mill in operation for some years after Eide left for North Dakota.

Indispensable to every rural community was a blacksmith shop. The U. S. census records list Ole Quale as blacksmith here in 1860. Much later his shop was turned into a garage by Albert Haugstad. Grove also had a shoe-repair shop operated by Mathias Stegen, and Carl Solie of Spring Grove had a saw-mill here. Wilmington Mutual Fire Insurance Company was started in 1876 by 30 farmers and still is in existence, with 1,250 policies and over \$22 million in coverage. Some of the rates charged are the same as when the company was organized 90 years ago.

After selling his interests in Wilmington Grove, Olaus Burtness moved to Caledonia. In 1900 he ran for Houston County treasurer on the Republican ticket and held the office until 1918. From then until 1920 he was editor of the *Caledonia Journal*. He was connected with the Caledonia First National Bank a number of years, and was vice-president until it went out of existence. When the State Bank of Caledonia was organized he became president. He also was postmaster.

Carl Burtness, the brother of Olaus and also a resident of Wilmington, served three terms as state representative from Houston County, was active in township affairs, and was secretary of the Wilmington Fire Insurance Company for 30 years. Still another brother, Edwin, who supplied some of the history of the Grove, was a director of the Spring Grove Four Square Oil Company for 36 years, a successful farmer, and currently is an officer with the insurance company.

In Wilmington, as in most settlements, the church was an important part of the lives of the people. With other surrounding areas they joined the Spring Grove Lutheran parish, organized in 1855. They left this congregation in 1908 and formed a new parish with Caledonia Immanuel and Jefferson Church. The first pastor was Rev. H. J. Wein, who had been an assistant at Spring Grove. In 1921, he was called to Winona. Subsequently, the parish was served by Rev. Clarence Lee, Rev. O. C. Brenna, Rev. Richard Hanson, and at present Rev. K. Roger Johnson.

Before the arrival of the first pastor, Rev. F. C. Clausen in 1857, the Wilmington Grove people were served by missionaries of the Norwegian Synod, lay preachers, and representatives of the American Bible Society. Services were held in homes, in the open, and in schools after they were built. Religious instruction for children was a major concern. Such schools were conducted in private homes until the first public school was built in 1857 near the corner of the church-yard, where a cemetery had been started. Records show that for many years this school served as a church and a public hall.

The first church in Wilmington was built in 1868 on a two-acre lot donated by Amund Asbjornson Stenehjelm, next to the log school. It was used until 1908 when the present large brick church was erected and more centrally located in the congregational area. The old church was razed in 1926 and a funeral chapel was built on the site from materials from the old edifice.

The lay-member who left the greatest imprint on the congregation was John P. Kopang, who had been connected with Luther College in Decorah, Iowa and helped organize the first orchestra there. From 1880 Kopang served as parochial teacher, organist, choir director and assistant to the pastor for almost 50 years. Both he and Miss Mary Oleson, a parochial

teacher and social worker, were residents of Wilmington Grove many years. After becoming an invalid, Miss Oleson continued conducting Bible classes from her bedside.

Another secular teacher was Halvor Lie, who arrived in Houston County in the early 1850s with his parents from Elroy, Wisconsin. He attended Luther College and later at the Winona Normal School, and taught in Wilmington and Spring Grove, serving as parochial teacher in the summer.

In a report published in 1874, there was still in Houston County over 2,000 acres of government land. Wilmington was the only township where every acre was taken. Many of the names of the early settlers still are familiar in the area because of descendants living here: Ingvald Thronsdon Doely, Gulbrand Guberud, Iver Kinneberg, Ole Knudson Myhre, Endre Roble, Tove Tweeten, Peter Torgenrud, Amund Lunde, Endre Trehus, Christian Glasrud, Herman Dusterud, Ole Halbakken, Lars Jome, Ole Engen, Ole Sandness, Johan Ostern, Anders Hagen, Haavel Johnsrud, Haaken Ellested, Engebret Solandsen, Peter Rask, Johannes Bondelie, Nils Selland, David Ostby, Gunder Oseth, Thosten Aamodth, and others.

Many of the descendants of the early settlers moved westward. Probably no township in the county did so much to form the nucleus of settlements in the Dakotas and the Red River Valley as Wilmington. Gone now are most of the dense woods from which the hamlet derived its name, and also gone is the spring that once gushed down the glen. Only three residences, the abandoned creamery, and parts of a few foundations remain to mark Wilmington Grove.

Until recently a sign near the spur of the Reno-Preston Railroad about halfway between Caledonia and Spring Grove read "Wilmington Grove." Whether this misspelling was arbitrary or had reference to the village farther south is not known. The spur was not a regular station but a place where freight-cars were left when the trains were too long for the locomotives to ascend the steep grade to the east.

It was sometimes used for unloading freight, before trucks came into use, by those willing to pay the extra charge for having the trains stop and sidetrack the cars. When the Wilmington Church was built in 1908, bricks, stone lintels and other heavy material was unloaded here, saving many miles of hauling when horses were the only means of transportation.

# Wabasha Was Once a Super County

When the U.S. census of 1850 was taken, the area now comprising Houston County was part of a much larger county called Wabasha.

Wabasha County was one of nine counties created by the Minnesota Territorial Assembly in 1849. It extended from the mouth of the Minnesota River, south to the Iowa line, and from the Mississippi River west to the Missouri River. It was all Indian land except a small wedge in present southern Houston County and southeastern Fillmore County, as they are set off today. The Winnebagoes had been removed from these areas in 1846. Although this historic Wabasha County was still a part of the primeval wilderness extending westerly to the Pacific, unsurveyed and not yet legally open to settlement, there were a few isolated trading posts, Indian missions, and white settlements strung along the Mississippi.

According to the census the county of Wabasha had, in 1850, a population of 243, including women and children. Listed as occupying the stretch of river from the foot of Lake Pepin to the present Iowa line were four traders, five voyagers, three blacksmiths, fourteen farmers, ten laborers, six carpenters, two lumbermen, two raftsmen and one missionary. Figures are not available for the number of women and children, but it is known that at least four men living in what is now Houston County were married and had families.

Although fur trading was by 1850 drawing to a close, there still were voyageurs and Indian blacksmiths in the area. Voyageurs were the boatmen employed to transport furs to the large fur marts farther down the Mississippi. Indian blacksmiths were appointed by the government to repair the guns, traps and other implements used by the Indians.

Probably the best known of Indian blacksmiths on this stretch of river was Oliver Cratte. In 1829 he was armorer for the St. Peter Indian Agency. In the 1850 census he is listed as living near the foot of Lake Pepin and engaged as a blacksmith for the Sioux. Also listed as blacksmiths, somewhere north of Winona, were Paul Campbell and Oliver Raccicot.

As the U. S. Land Survey wasn't made until 1850, it is impossible to know in what later county or locality some of the persons listed in the census lived. Although information concerning the Houston County area before 1850 is limited, there were at least three settlements in existence that year.

An early history of Houston County tells of two brothers, John and Samuel Ross, originally from Pennsylvania, who came up from Galena, Illinois in 1847 and established themselves in the southeastern corner of the territory of Minnesota, in what now is Jefferson

Township. Census records fail to mention the Ross brothers. Whether this was because there was confusion as to the exact boundary, or they were so close to the border they were missed by the enumerators, is not known. The line between Minnesota and Iowa was established on August 4, 1846 after much wrangling in Congress. On this date the latitude of 43 degrees and 30 minutes was adopted, but no official or permanent marker seems to have been erected until several years later.

The cast-iron obelisk, about six feet high and 12 inches square at the bottom, tapering to seven inches at the top, inscribed with the year 1849, the latitude and the names Minnesota on the east side and Iowa on the west, was not erected until after the territorial line-survey was made through the region in 1852. Then it was placed in Section 35, about three miles from the river. The settlement became known as Ross' Landing and now is New Albin. The obelisk is in the outskirts of New Albin. The survey disclosed that one of the Ross claims was wholly in Iowa and the other straddled the line.

Another of the settlements started before the 1850s, in what later became Houston County, was the one at Brownsville. Located about 11 miles north of Ross' Landing, it was destined to become in territorial days the most prominent town of southeastern Minnesota. The founder, for whom the town was named, was Jobe Brown, an adventurer from the state of Michigan. After leaving Michigan, Jobe spent some time in the lead mines at Galena and served in the Mexican War.

In 1848 he made a trip of exploration up the Mississippi River, as far as the mouth of the Chippewa River, in search of a suitable place to start a settlement. Not finding a place to suit his fancy, he returned downriver to La Crosse and then crossed to the mouth of the Root River, where he found a few trappers. Staying but briefly, he continued on south and established himself near the foot of what became known as Wild Cat Bluff.

By 1850 Jobe's brother, Charles, and Jack Jackson had joined him. Jackson may have been a roustabout and rough river character mentioned in early county history as "Wild Cat Jack." Not much more is known of this desperado than that he was killed in a brawl with a bullet from his own gun, with which he had intended to kill Brown.

Of our persons listed in the 1850 census as farmers located in what is now Houston County, the only one mentioned as having a farm was Mr. Brown. He is listed as having 160 acres of land, of which four were under cultivation. The listing said also that he owned one team of horses valued at \$60. This is the first mention of agriculture in Houston County.

There also were settlers along the Root River Valley before the beginning of the 1850s. There is a tradition that when the first settlers arrived in the early 1850s on the site of what

became Rushford, they found a crude cross with the date 1845 marking the grave of an unknown person.

Early county histories tell of a lumberman, William Richmond, who established himself on Section 34, Hokah Township, in 1849. The census says he was married and had one daughter. William Frink and his family lived in the same locality. They were engaged in logging walnut timber and rafting it down the Mississippi as early as 1849.

Farther up the valley in what is now Mound Prairie Township lived a native of Germany named John Kripp, a family man with three children, whom the census listed as a weaver by trade. He also is known to have been engaged in rafting walnut logs down the Mississippi. There is a story that a large and valuable walnut raft sank somewhere in the region where he lived. Several attempts were made years later to locate it, but failed. Now it would be covered with several feet of river silt.

Palmer and William Cheeseboro were listed as farmers, but with no information as to their location or extent of farming operations. The 1850 census records, in addition to furnishing interesting information about the pioneers and their occupations, some no longer in existence, add much to the true history of the area and correct the errors sometimes appearing in early county histories.

# Place Names

## *Part I: Houston County Has a Reno of Its Own*

Freeburg, the small unincorporated village in Crooked Creek Township of Houston County, dates from the 1850s and was named for Freiburg, a town in the Black Forest of Germany. At one time it had a grist-mill, store, hotel, blacksmith shop and saloon, the latter only remaining. It became a station on the now abandoned Reno-Preston line.

Reno is named after Jesse Le Reno, an officer in the Mexican and Civil wars. After the building of the Caledonia, Mississippi and Western Railroad, the station at Reno was a busy transfer point for railroad shipping.

Winnebago is one of the few Indian names in the county. The township was named for the tribe that from the early 1830s to 1846 occupied what was known as the Neutral Grounds, which included Houston County.

Watertown in Winnebago Valley probably derived its name from the abundance of water in the area, with many large springs and much swampy land. This unincorporated village in early years had stores, mills and blacksmith shops. Houston County maps show the location of Winnebago Valley, earlier known as Watertown, where Indians had a stream-crossing before the arrival of the white man.

Whether Edwin Stevens, the first to stake out a claim in Yucatan, had earlier traveled in Central America is not known. If he had, it would not be more remarkable than the experiences of an early settler in Spring Grove Township named Anders Foss, who before coming here in 1853 had crossed the Isthmus of Panama, leading a donkey on his return from the gold-fields in California. In the native language of the first Yucatan the name meant, "I don't understand." When Columbus and his crew landed on the shores of the country, they tried by signs to find out its name. The natives shook their heads and answered Yu-Ca-Tan.

Dedham was the name given to the post-office established in Yucatan by Edmund McIntire, born at Dedham, Massachusetts, of Scotch ancestry. In 1855 he, with others, arrived in what became the township. McIntire's claim was on land where the village of Yucatan now stands.

Bergen, a hamlet on the Minnesota-Iowa state line in Wilmington Township, now is called Bee and still is shown on Minnesota maps. It was named after Bergen, Norway

because of the large number of Norwegian settlers who established themselves along Waterloo Creek in the area. Why it became known as Bee is unknown, unless through twists of translation the name emerged from the Norwegian name for a town—*By*. Although now predominantly Norwegian, a German named Joseph Schwarzhoff gave impetus to the village, which at one time had a store, mill, blacksmith shop and post office.

Wilmington Township is named for Wilmington, Delaware, where some of the early English settlers came from.

Eitzen derived its name from the town in Germany which had been the home of some of the early settlers. The village was started in the middle 1860s.

New Albin, across into Iowa, may have been derived from the Latin and poetic name of England, and may have some connection with the white chalk cliffs on the southern coast of England in an area called Albion.

Jefferson, one of the place-names perpetuating men of fame, honored Thomas Jefferson. All traces of the village located a mile north of New Albin have vanished except a stone building, which at one time was a wheat-buying depot. Jefferson first was called Ross' Landing for John and Samuel Ross.

The township of Money Creek was first named Hamilton in honor of Alexander Hamilton. There are several stories about why the name was changed to Money Creek, with no foundation in fact in any of them. One is that a few gold coins were found in the clear water of the creek. Another story is that at one time a roll of bills left out to dry after being soaked were blown into the water again. The third story is that an enterprising settler, while observing the stream, remarked that a lot of money could be made by taking advantage of the water-power possibilities of the stream. By 1853 several persons interested in mill-sites had staked out claims along the stream. A post-office had been established a decade later, a store opened, and several grist-mills were in operation. The name had to be changed from Hamilton because the territorial legislature passed an act forbidding the use of the same name for more than one town or city. There already was a Hamilton, so it became Money Creek.

La Crescent is the best example of fanciful names in Houston County. Since the coming of the white man the site has had several names. During the time of the French explorers and traders the area was known as *Casse Fusils*, meaning broken gun. After Peter Cameron, a La Crosse trader, established himself here in 1851 and began operating a ferry across the Mississippi, it became known as Cameron's Crossing. La Crescent was coined by a Kentucky town-site company that in the mid-1850s platted a village and began selling lots in

what the promoters envisioned as a metropolis on the west-side of the river. It was said that people were so eager to obtain lots in La Crescent that they purchased land partly submerged in water to as high as the edges of the river bluffs. The name Manton was first proposed, but rejected as not being pretentious enough for the promoters' plans. To the promoters of La Crescent there was one dark cloud on the horizon—the rival city across the river, La Crosse. Reverend Neill's history of Houston County says the origin of the name La Crescent goes back to the time of the Crusaders when they, in their contests with the Saracens and Turks, carried on their struggles under the banner of the Cross and the Crescent. The promoters, under the Cross and the Crescent, felt they would finally triumph over their rival, La Crosse. They even saw in the curved hills back of the village another sign of ultimate victory.

River Junction, north of La Crescent, was in earlier years known as Rome from the large number of Italians employed there when the railroads were being built.

The Root River is said to have been known to the Sioux Indians as Hokah, meaning root. The English rendition of Hokah (Root) as a name for the stream first appears on regional maps in 1805-06, but the village established by the Root River became known by the Sioux name.

The only place-name derived from boat landings, ferries and stream-crossings that has survived is Riceford. One story is that the place was named after Henry Mower Rice, who visited the community while he was a territorial delegate in the 1850s and forded an ancient Indian trail that crossed the stream. Another tradition, with some evidence, is that while Rice in the 1810s had charge of the Winnebago fur-trade, he had a fur-trading collecting depot somewhere near the site of Riceford. He or his agents may have used the ford regularly while collecting furs from the Indians in the region. It's said that Rice's Ford was used before Houston County was settled. The name was later shortened to Riceford.

While perhaps not as startling or romantic as some names found elsewhere, the foregoing list seems to exemplify the type of solid citizens for which the area was named, starting proudly at the top with Houston County, named for one of the nation's heroes—Sam Houston.

### *Part II: Where'd Lorette and Winfield Go?*

No longer can you find in Houston County the Indian and French names many early settlers bestowed on the places where they located a century and more ago, but all of them have significance.

The county itself was named for Sam Houston by Captain Samuel McPhail, the first settler in Caledonia village, the county seat. Both men were in the Mexican War. Sam Houston was the hero in the capture of San Jacinto and became the first president of the Republic of Mexico. Later he was a U.S. senator from Texas.

McPhail was a Scotchman who constructed the first buildings in the village, which he named Caledonia for his home country. Caledonia was the ancient and poetic name of Scotland. The name is Latin in origin. McPhail built two log cabins after reaching Caledonia in 1853, one for a home and the other for a store. Travelers on the Brownsville-Elliota territorial road, laid out across the county in 1854, referred to the settlement as McPhailsburg.

Houston village was named by George William McSpadden, on whose claim the village was located. This was before the county officially was named.

Among the places named for early settlers was Brownsville. Jobe and Charles Brown arrived on the site in 1849, platted the village in 1854, and started some of the first enterprises in the settlement.

Looneyville never developed, but the valley that was platted in 1857 is called Looney Valley for John S. Looney, a member of the town-site company that had visions of making the village its cream city and the hub of the county. Two other dream cities were built in Looney Valley—Winfield and St. Lawrence.

Winfield didn't develop much beyond the figment in the mind of its founder, the enterprising Scotchman William G. McSpadden, also the founder of Houston. It was named after Winfield Scott, a general in the Mexican War. Three miles from Houston on the McSpadden homestead, the founder built a dam and flour mills, hostelry and a brick-yard. Fortune favored the city until 1874 when a disastrous flood on Silver Creek carried away the dam and damaged the flour-mill beyond repair. The undaunted McSpadden rebuilt the dam and a larger and more modern flour-mill, but in 1882 came the *coup de grace*—a fire.

The canonical St. Lawrence never got past the parchment stage before it vanished, leaving only a cemetery.

Lorette, also spelled Loretta, is a long-since-forgotten stage-coach stop on the La Crosse-Winona territorial road. Located in Mound Prairie Township, it was named after Edward and Seth Lore, early settlers and founders of the village. It was famous for its territorial hotel and tavern, the Loretta House.

Pope's Prairie, about three miles south of Caledonia, was named for Dr. Timothy Pope and his nephew, Dr. John Edwin Pope, early physicians in that area. They were among New Yorkers settling there.

Newhouse, the former village along the railroad southwest of Spring Grove, was named for Tollef Newhouse, on whose land the station was located.

According to Reverend Neill's history of Houston County, Sheldon village and township were named for Julius Sheldon, an early settler. Another plausible story is that the name came from Dr. James Giles Sheldon, a pioneer doctor in Mound Prairie Township, who was prominent in county affairs, including creating and organizing townships.

Topographical features became another common source of place-names.

Black Hammer is a translation from the Norwegian *sort hammer*, meaning black or dark-colored hill. It was named by Knud Bergo, an early settler in Spring Grove Township, from whose cabin the bluff was sharply silhouetted. In Norwegian *sort* means black and *hammer*, while literally meaning an implement for pounding, was sometimes used in referring to a knoll or hill shaped like a hammer. The name was suggested to Bergo by the charred appearance of the hill after a prairie fire, reminding him of a hill in his home community in Valdres, Norway. This is a unique name, probably not duplicated anywhere in the U.S.

Mound Prairie is derived from a remarkably rounded hill surrounded by valleys on all sides. The name supposedly was first suggested by Dr. Chase, who was for a time a resident of the area. It is probable that Dr. Sheldon officially gave Mound Prairie Township its name.

San Jacinto was laid out by Dr. Sheldon during the 1850s when new town-sites were almost epidemic. The exact location in Mound Prairie Township isn't known. The Mexican War, still fresh in the minds of people, apparently inspired the name.

The name of Spring Grove dates from 1854 when James Smith staked out land on the site of the village and secured a post-office. He called it that from the many springs issuing from every ravine surrounding the settlement, which earlier was known as Smith's Grove. In early church and county records it was referred to as Norwegian Ridge from the large number of Norwegians congregated in the area. One particularly large spring north of town was humorously called the *Preste springen*, or preacher's spring, as it was on land where the parsonage stood.

Crooked Creek evidently was named for the many twists and turns running through the valley in its sluggish effort to reach the Mississippi Valley.

## PART III: PEOPLE & THE PRESS

# The Memories of Vagrants

They were, at once, a pleasure and a nuisance

Vagrants, more commonly known as tramps, are rarely seen in rural areas since the arrival of public welfare and the trek to the cities, but in earlier years settlers in the Spring Grove area were plagued by a number of them who sought board and room for a day or two. Most of them apparently were well-bred, enlightened, and had some education, who found it easier to take advantage of the settlers' hospitality than to exert themselves at manual labor. All of them had one idea in common: that the world owed them a living. Some of them were drinkers, were usually unkempt, and often rude. They had surprising backgrounds and resources, usually not discovered by the struggling settlers until they were long gone.

One of them was Martin Roneberg, a schoolmaster from Bergen, Norway. After arriving in America he spent some time in a Wisconsin settlement, probably Wittenburg. In the late 1870s he taught parochial school in various Norwegian settlements in Allamakee County, Iowa, and in about 1880 drifted into Houston County where for 30 years he was a vagabond, teaching the children and occasionally conducting a family worship in the homes to which he gained access.

His arrival would be announced by a violent rapping on the door with his walking stick. After he was admitted and found that he was welcome to stay overnight, he divested himself of his great coat, which had the appearance of having at one time belonged to a fellow of lesser build. It was enlarged in the back with a strip of cloth of different color and a little shorter than the rest of the coat. He sought out the most comfortable chair in the room and made himself at home without a care in the world.

As time went on and the places where he was welcome became fewer, his visits became more frequent at the places he was admitted. As he grew older his appetite, always good, increased. At the table he took the best piece of meat and the largest potato. He also grew more critical of the food—it was too hot or too cold, and he grew impatient with children, reprimanding them. He became careless about cleanliness so few housewives cared to furnish him with lodging.

In 1911 he suffered a stroke and, as he didn't have any known relatives, he was admitted to the Houston County Poor Farm. Some time later he surprised the county officials by offering them \$300 to care of him in his last years, and requested he be given a Christian burial at the Lutheran cemetery in Wilmington Township. He died on October 20, 1911. After his death the county officials found that he had a bank deposit of \$400 and a receipt

showing he had contributed \$1,500 to an old people's home at Wittenburg, Wisconsin. Sewn inside the lining of his clothes was \$2,200.

In the 1870s a small bare-headed man with long hair reaching down to his shoulders could be seen wending his way from place to place in the Spring Grove community, seeking food or sometimes a night's lodging. The strange Roe Tune had immigrated from Norway but, as he never divulged information concerning himself, nothing was known of his family history. It was evident, however, that he had considerable schooling, for he was a wizard in mathematics, had a remarkable knowledge of astronomy, and a keen interest in astrology. His interest in astronomy seemed to border on lunacy, for he spent most nights gazing at the stars. He claimed he could foretell future events by the appearance and position of the planets. In summer he rarely slept indoors. He never shaved or cut his hair or wore anything on his head. In winter he never wore an overcoat but wrapped himself in a blanket like an Indian.

My father recalled one morning in the 1870s when he awakened to find this strange man, with an incessant cough from a bad cold and wrapped in a red blanket, sitting outside his home, waiting to be offered breakfast. After the meal, he silently moved on. In the late 1880s he disappeared from this community. Nothing more was heard about him until several years later when an immigrant from Norway spoke of a man fitting his description that had appeared in his home area in the old country. No one ever knew how this mysterious little man, who had no funds or relatives, had been able to make his way back to Norway.

Then there was Ole Krogstad, nicknamed "Greip Ola," who immigrated from Norway and came to Spring Grove in the late 1870s. He was believed to have come from an aristocratic and wealthy family but, due to the fact that he was a wanderer and addicted to alcohol, the family got rid of their disgrace by sending him to America, a common way of handling undesirable relatives.

A strong, husky man, he was much in demand for doing heavy work, but he never stayed long at one place. While on one of his frequent sprees, he would stagger down the street muttering about being a well-bred, well-to-do gentleman from Norway, and usually ended up sleeping in a gutter. As he grew older and the effect of strong drink prevented him from doing hard labor, he tramped around in the community with his whiskey jug and a soldering kit, repairing tin-ware for a meal, a night's lodging, or a few cents. Since most of his earnings went for alcohol, he was poorly dressed and suffered from the cold. A merchant in Spring Grove, feeling sorry for him, gave him an overcoat—which was promptly traded off for hard cider.

As he became more and more of a nuisance around town, some men chipped in and bought him a train ticket for North Dakota. After two months he was back again in Spring Grove, having returned on foot—a feat of which he was very proud. Once when carrying his whiskey jug across country he stumbled over a rail-fence and was unable to get up again. As he lay listening to the whiskey gurgling out of the jug *clug-clug*, he said, “I hear you my friend, but I am unable to help you.”

In 1897, when on one of his rounds, he stepped on a rusty nail and contracted blood poisoning. He got as far as the home of Embrick Benson, where he was always welcome to stop. There he died at 65. After his death a dispute arose in the congregation, as some didn't favor burying him in the church cemetery. At this point a prominent member of the church spoke up, saying, “It is not for us to pass judgment on anyone. In spite of his failings it is our duty to give him a decent burial.” Over the objections of some, he was buried in a corner just inside the church-yard.

# Marte Ole Thought He Knew Profit Key

In the early days of the Spring Grove settlement there was a section of the village known as Smith's Grove. Here, along the territorial road, there was a small store kept by an eccentric old fellow named Ole Iverson. To the settlers he was known as "Marte Ole," and his establishment was known as the Marte Ole store. Norwegians had a curious custom of sometimes attaching the name of the wife to that of the husband. Mrs. Iverson's given name was Marte, hence his unique nickname.

The building housing the store also served as living quarters. The store wasn't open for business in the morning until the storekeeper had dragged his bed away from the door. He placed it there at night so nobody could break in. The room was tidied up to look as businesslike as possible before customers were admitted.

Marte Ole's stock of merchandise was very limited. It consisted of little more than a few groceries, a few bolts of cloth, needles and thread, some candy, a barrel of molasses, a few bottles of "Pain Killer," and Harvest Bitters. Pain Killer was one of the items found on the shelves of all early stores. It was believed to cure everything from toothaches to corns.

The story goes that one night Marte Ole's molasses barrel sprung a leak and the opening of the store the next day was delayed until the molasses had been ladled back into the barrel and the floor scraped clean.

His stock of Harvest Bitters was always fresh, for it was manufactured in the neighboring town of Sheldon by Dr. F. B. Hinkley, who for some years carried on a practice there. In his leisure time—which was considerable—he began the manufacture of a tonic which he gave this name.

His Harvest Bitters were advertised as being good for both body and soul. Certain herb extracts, advertised as being excellent blood purifiers, were blended with whiskey. The result was a most exhilarating drink. Dr. Hinkley attested to the healthfulness of the Bitters by consuming huge quantities himself.

It was said that Marte Ole's handwriting was such as to baffle a handwriting expert. It was so bad that after writing out an order for goods he had difficulty in making it out himself. However, being of a philosophical mind, he consoled himself by saying, "They probably will be able to make it out in Chicago."

His prices were often below what he himself paid for his goods. When out of thread, he sometimes went to one of his competitors and purchased a few spools for five cents each,

and sold them two for five cents. When asked how he could make any money that way he replied, "If the volume of your business is large enough, you are sure to make a profit."

It is probable that his business volume never reached the point where he was able to make a profit, for after a few years he bolted his door and vanished from Spring Grove history.

# Farm to Gold Mine to Farm

## The Exciting Life of a Pioneer

Probably few of the early arrivals in Spring Grove Township had a more interesting and exciting life story than Anders Brynildsen Foss who, in 1851, took part in a perilous overland journey to the California gold-fields, and then three years later came back home across Central America by foot and mule.

Anders Foss was born in 1826, about 14 miles from Bergen, Norway. In his youth he worked around on different farms and in the fisheries of Bergen. The last winter he spent in Norway he worked for a wealthy merchant in Bergen. Relying on the man's integrity, nothing was mentioned as to what was to be his salary, and when spring came the merchant gave him \$2.75 for his winter labors. This so exasperated him that he made up his mind to seek his fortunes in America.

After much hard labor he was, by the spring of 1848, able to scrape together enough money so that he could secure passage on an emigrant vessel bound for New York, landing there on July 4th. His destination was Janesville, Wisconsin where a cousin of his, Mons Foss, had settled after leaving for the United States two years earlier. He continued on to Albany, thence to Buffalo by the Erie Canal, and then on to Milwaukee by a Great Lakes sailing vessel.

Since he was almost penniless, he started for Janesville on foot. After covering about 22 miles he reached a small hamlet called Georgeville. There he met an Irish farmer who hired him for two weeks to assist him in haying. After working for 11 days his hands became so blistered from handling the scythe that he was unable to continue for the time agreed upon, so the farmer refused to pay him. He trudged on and managed to reach Janesville, where he met Mons Foss, who was employed as a bricklayer there. Mons hired him as a mason's helper for \$1 an hour. When he was laid off in the fall, he took whatever work he could find to get room and board for the winter.

In 1849 gold was discovered in California. A thrill of excitement ran through the settlements. In Janesville it was heightened by a man just back from California, who told glowing tales of that far-off and almost unknown country, where gold was found everywhere and riches were in everyone's reach. These stories so aroused the spirit of adventure in a host of men in the community that Anders Foss, his friend and five others, formed a partnership determined to brave the perils of an overland journey to this new El Dorado.

The men outfitted themselves with five covered wagons and five yoke of oxen, and set out from Janesville in early April of 1851. After crossing the Mississippi River to Council Bluffs, Iowa, they stocked up with provisions to continue their westward trek. They continued on, crossing Nebraska and Colorado without particular incident. This part of the country was not yet settled. The monotony of the endless prairies was broken only by the sight of the few Indians, who caused them no harm, and by bands of adventurers like themselves on their way to the gold-fields of California.

After reaching the desert, they traded off their oxen for mules. At Salt Lake City, Utah they made a stop for provisions for the trip across the Rockies, which crossed by way of Mormon's Pass. They were now entering territory inhabited by more hostile Indians. Some apprehension was caused by a large band of them who, uninvited, joined the caravan, but after following them for a couple of days they disappeared.

At this time some of the tribes in the Utah regions were very hostile to the whites and besides, rumors had been circulated that the Mormons had alienated themselves from the Indians. For greater protection the many small bands of gold-seekers banded themselves into large caravans. When camp was pitched at night the vehicles, animals, and supplies were placed in a circle, with the men in the middle.

The caravan of which Foss was a member did not experience much trouble. The only tragic event that occurred was that one man, foolishly straying ahead of the rest of the caravan, fired on a band of Indians, killing a squaw. This so infuriated the Indians that they threatened to massacre the whole caravan unless the guilty one was turned over to them. When he was delivered to the Indians, he was brutally flayed and scalped.

After four months and ten days of travel the caravan reached Placerville, California, at this time called Hang Town, as it was beyond the pale of law and order. Fights, killings, and robberies were of common occurrence. The only laws in operation were the ones made by the miners themselves, and criminals were often hung after being convicted by makeshift trials that were presided over by unqualified and unscrupulous judges.

At Placerville, Foss and his cousin hired out at \$4 a day to a company that was operating a small mine. This was an insignificant amount considering what they had to pay for necessities and to the fabulous wealth they had been told awaited them in California. In their spare time they tried to pan for gold, but without success. They then decided to try a new location.

The following spring they traveled up to Sacramento Valley to a mining camp named Marysville, but like Placerville it was notoriously rough. They continued on to Parker's Bar,

where it was reported that diggings were rich. Here they bought a share in a mine but as the returns were poor, they soon sold out.

Soon after, Anders Foss moved on another 40 miles farther north where he, in partnership with 15 others, purchased a share in another mining project, each member contributing \$100 to the venture. This company went to a considerable expense in building a dam and plume to divert the water in the river so they could pan for gold in the streambed.

After operating for a couple of weeks before the rainy season and realizing only about \$6 a day, they sold out to a Chinaman who lost everything when the whole outfit was washed away in a flash flood. Ander's cousin, Mons, had by this time given up mining for gold and had established a boarding-house at Parker's Bar, but the business was poor and the financial returns just as disappointing as trying to find gold so he sold out. Meanwhile, Anders hadn't fared so well either as he had lost most of his money in a "freeze-out" game. By this time the two Norwegian friends had discovered that the road to sudden riches was a mirage and they began thinking of going back to Wisconsin where they could make a living by a slower and surer way—farming.

Anders, however, still had hopes of making a lucky strike and persuaded Mons to accompany him to a mining camp called Downieville, some miles from Sacramento, where he had heard that a number of gold-seekers had made a strike. After several weeks of fruitless prospecting and panning in a number of likely places, even Anders was ready to call it quits and they decided to head back for home. Not caring to attempt again the long, dangerous overland trek back to Wisconsin, they went to San Francisco where, with many other disillusioned gold-seekers, they secured passage on a ship going down the coast. After eight days of travel the boat reached Acapulco, Mexico where they made a stop for supplies. Another eight days of travel brought them to Nicaragua.

The hazardous journey across the Isthmus, between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, was made through the fever-infested jungles of Nicaragua, partly by boat, partly by mule-back, and partly on foot. Here some of the party died from malaria and yellow fever. Finally reaching the Atlantic coast they boarded a gulf-steamer which, after three days, landed them at New Orleans. The next stage of their homeward journey was made by steamboat up the Mississippi River to Dubuque. From there they proceeded on foot again via Galena, Illinois to Janesville, the place from which they had started three years earlier. They were poorer in pocket, but richer in experience.

By this time settlers had started to stream into Minnesota and Iowa in large numbers. In the fall of 1854 Anders and Mons started walking from Janesville to seek land on which to settle on the west side of the Mississippi River. After crossing the Mississippi at McGregor, Iowa, they continued on northwestward to Winneshiek County where they had been

informed that there was still much government land available. Finding land to their liking north of Decorah, Anders purchased 160 acres of wild land on which he built a shack and began making improvements and leading a bachelor's life.

On June 20, 1885 he married Anna Solberg, daughter of Anders Solberg, who had a farm right north of the Iowa line in Spring Grove Township. Their marriage took place at a missionary meeting held at the log cabin of Knud Kieland, an early settler west of Spring Grove, at which time the Lutheran congregation at Spring Grove was organized. When Mr. Solberg died in 1861, Anders sold his Decorah farm and bought the land of his deceased father-in-law on the Minnesota side of the state line. A few years later he sold this farm and moved to a larger tract of land in Section 31 of Spring Grove. On this farm he made extensive improvements. Mr. and Mrs. Foss continued living there until their retirement in 1887.

They moved to Spring Grove, built a brick home on Main Street, sold it a few years later to their son-in-law, Frank Joerg, and built another home where he and Mrs. Foss continued to live until her death in 1918. Mr. Foss died three years later at 95. Despite the hardships of his gold-rush days and the rigors of pioneering in Minnesota, he enjoyed robust health almost to the year of his death. A man of slight build, wiry and active, his brisk and youthful gait was a familiar sight in Spring Grove. He and his wife raised a family of eleven—six daughters and five sons.

# Professor Cornelius Narveson

Probably the most well-known of the early teachers in the Spring Grove area was Cornelius Narveson. Not only was he a noted religious instructor, a teacher in the public schools, both in the village and some of the nearby districts, but was also a professor at Luther College from 1873 until his death in 1884. Before moving to Decorah, he did much for the congregation at Spring Grove during the illness of Rev. Clausen, and after the death of Rev. Clausen he conducted religious meetings, kept the confirmation class going, and looked after congregational matters until the arrival of Rev. S. S. Reque.

He was born in Eggedahl, an annex of Sigdahl, Norway, on June 23, 1841. His parents were Narve Haakenson Grønhøvd and Gunhild Haldørsdatter. Of the five children in his family who reached maturity the eldest was Ingeborg, who came to America in 1843, where she married Lars Halstenrud. She became the mother of Reier Larson Halstenrud, who served as assistant pastor at Spring Grove from 1876 until his death in 1878. Cornelius, the youngest in the family, came to America when he was 12 years old. They settled at Jefferson Prairie, Wisconsin where he made his home with his brother-in-law, Lars Halstenrud, until 1854 when he moved with his parents to Fillmore County and settled near Riceford. Since his parents were poor, they were unable to purchase a farm of their own and, as often was the case with many poor immigrants, Cornelius spent his first years in this country working to repay the one who had advanced him money for the journey to America. An older brother, Haakon Narveson, had arrived in Spring Grove in 1853, being one of the first settlers in the Spring Grove township.

In 1858, at the age of 17, Cornelius was confirmed by Rev. Clausen in the first confirmation service conducted in Spring Grove. Because Cornelius was a conscientious and diligent student, Rev. Clausen secured for him a position as a religious teacher for the congregation. In 1863 he came back to Jefferson Prairie to seek work and was hired by a farmer named Thor Halvorson, who later moved to Madison Township, Winnishiek County. Mr. Halvorson once asked Cornelius why he went so far to look for work when he had a job teaching in Spring Grove. Cornelius replied, "I feel that I have not had enough education to qualify as a teacher, and as long as I stay around in Spring Grove, Rev. Clausen will continue to ask me to teach." Cornelius and Thor Halvorson remained steadfast friends for life and Cornelius spent many later vacations at the home of Thor.

In 1865, Cornelius enrolled at Luther College with his nephew, Reier Larson Halstenrud. Mr. Larson, who was preparing himself for the ministry, majored in the grammar and classical courses, while Cornelius, intent on teaching, matriculated in the Normal

Department. The Normal departments in the church schools at this time were mainly a preparatory course for students who wished to become teachers of religion, so Cornelius entered the Normal School at Winona so that he could be prepared to teach also in the public schools. However, he found that he had to interrupt his studies and take a temporary teaching job in order to finance the rest of his training. During this interim period, he filled temporary vacancies in the nearby school districts and was given a good exposure to his life's work.

After graduation from the Winona Normal School he came back to Spring Grove, where he served as parochial teacher that summer. In the fall of that year he secured a position as a public school teacher in the Spring Grove district, which he held until 1873. After Rev. Clausen died in the fall of 1870, Cornelius took over his confirmation class. As the congregation was now without a pastor this class was confirmed the following year by Rev. Nels Brandt. Rev. S. S. Reque, who accepted the pastorate after Clausen's death, mentioned in later reminiscings of the great assistance he received from Cornelius Narveson while getting established in his new charge.

When Luther College began its classes in the fall of 1873, there was a vacancy on the college faculty due to the illness of Professor K. Berg. As few teachers were available at that time, the directors of the college decided unanimously to call Cornelius to fill the post temporarily, upon the strong recommendation of Pastor Reque. At first Cornelius declined the post, feeling that he lacked the necessary qualifications and experience for college teaching, but later, persuaded by Rev. Reque, he accepted the position.

Although he had been originally called on a temporary basis, his work was so satisfactory that he was soon appointed a professor—a post he held for 11 years. At first he taught mathematics and geography; later he taught natural sciences and chemistry. He was of a quiet, pensive, and reserved nature and it was said that he hardly ever smiled or laughed. He spent most of his time in preparing his class work, or in increasing his own knowledge of the subjects he was called upon to teach. For relaxation he had taught himself to play the organ and oftentimes, late at night, the sound of some sad refrain could be heard issuing from his apartment.

He seems to have had a way of handling students, so as to gain their confidence and respect, and in no class-room was discipline more perfect than his. Cornelius was cooperative with his fellow teachers and superiors. His voice was weak, which made it difficult for him to speak to a large audience. He was at his best as a teacher guiding, counseling and instructing advanced students. His face shone with kindness and sympathy, and he was always tolerant toward wrongs committed by others. It was always his goal to do everything right and in a Christian spirit. He was always afraid that he might either by word

or deed harm his fellow man. When Laur Larsen, president of Luther College, who had been his superior and at one time his pastor, visited him on his death-bed, the first thing Cornelius asked was that Larsen would forgive him for any wrong that he might have caused his associates.

It has been told that Cornelius was extremely absent-minded and that he would fall into reveries and become unaware of being in the class-room. It has been said that his pupils welcomed these trances, as it gave them a chance to slip unnoticed; and when Cornelius awoke he would find himself alone in the room with all the children outside enjoying a game of ball.

One of his former students at Luther College is supposed to have said, "Although Cornelius was one of our most respected professors, I must confess that we were guilty of sometimes poking fun of him behind his back. When concentrating on some problem, when giving a demonstration on the blackboard, he had the habit of touching his nose on the side and saying, 'Do you see the point?' We would all do the same and I remember how a painful expression would steal over his face when he discovered we were mimicking him."

On November 12, 1879, he was married to Berthe Maria Blexrud of Spring Grove. She was one of those whom he had instructed for confirmation, and who had been one of his pupils in both public and parochial school. They were blessed with three children, all of whom died within the same year in early childhood from diphtheria and Scarlet Fever, which was prevalent in the community during the 1880's. One boy was buried by the side of his father at the Lutheran cemetery at Decorah. One girl, Maria, born in 1882, died in 1884, and a second girl, Engeborg, born in 1883, died on November 23, 1844. They were both buried at the old church cemetery at Spring Grove. Mrs. Narveson lived until 1923, and is buried at the West End Cemetery in Spring Grove.

Some time before his marriage Cornelius had contracted a cough which, as time went on gradually became worse, and which his friends knew was the start of tuberculosis—eventually the cause of his death. In spite of his illness he kept on with his school work until he lost his voice and could only speak in a whisper. In the spring of 1884 he was relieved of some of his class-work, but in March of that year he had to give up his job as a teacher. He hoped that by a long rest and spending his time out in the summer sunshine his health would improve, but this was not to be.

On May 17<sup>th</sup> of that year he made a trip to Riceford, where he attended the funeral of his brother-in-law, Lars Halstenrud. Here he also saw his aged mother for the last time. He was unable to talk to her as she was deaf and he could only whisper. This was his last trip out of Decorah, but he did take almost daily trips from the college to downtown with his own horse and buggy. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, he took part in the graduation services at the college. It

was now becoming clear to him that there was no hope for recovery, and his last days were spent in preparing for death, which was drawing near. He was up and dressed until his last day. On the morning of July 24, 1884, he received the Last Sacrament and in the afternoon of that same day he died. The funeral was held at Decorah, where he was buried at the Lutheran cemetery. Probably no teacher in the Spring Grove area was more loved and respected, and more dedicated to his profession, than Cornelius Narveson.

# Snowshoe Thompson—Bigger Than Life— Was a Living Legend

There are relatives in Spring Grove and in the Waterloo Ridge area of Iowa south of here who will recall the story of John Rue Thompson—one of the many Norwegian immigrants who ventured to seek their fortunes in California after gold was discovered there in 1848.

Of these, none was destined to lead a more adventurous life than the man who became better known as Snowshoe Thompson. From 1857 to 1868 he carried the U.S. mail from Placerville to Carson Valley over the snow-swept mountains on skis, the mail-bag strapped to his back. Today his skis, boots and mail-bags are on display in the museum at Sutter's Fort in Sacramento, California.

In all kinds of weather at the appointed time Thompson would set out on another of his hazardous missions, a 90-mile journey through an isolated region of snow-covered peaks, towering cliffs and rugged canyons, with only a few prospectors' cabins along the way. It has been told that when he strapped on his skis, and the postal employees at Placerville helped him adjust the mail-bag on his back, they never expected to see him alive again.

He was born on the Rue homestead in the diocese of Tinn, Telemarken, Norway in 1827. His father died when he was a child. In 1837 his mother, then remarried to Thomas Thompson, with her two sons John and Thorstein, her husband and a step-daughter, immigrated to America. The boys adopted their stepfather's surname.

They first settled at Fox River in La Salle County, Illinois and the following year moved to Shelby County, Montana. Here they made their home until 1840 when they moved to the Sugar Creek settlement near Keokuk, Iowa. Here the mother died. In 1846 John Thompson and his brother moved to Wisconsin where they became, with others, the founders of the Blue Mound settlement. In 1851 Thompson joined a party of adventurers headed for the gold-fields of California. After crossing the Mississippi they stopped at St. Joseph, Missouri, where gold-seekers assembled into large caravans for greater protection against hostile Indians.

Thompson is known to have tried his luck at Coon Hollow near Placerville (at the time called Hang Town), and to have worked at Kelsey's Diggings, Diamond Valley, Georgetown, Webber's Creek, Grey Eagle Hill, Indian Digging's and Grizzly Flat. He then abandoned gold-mining and homesteaded a claim along Putah Creek in Yolo County and began life as a

farmer and rancher. He lived here until 1857 when he acquired a 160-acre tract in Diamond Valley, in Alpine County, near Genoa and only nine miles from the Nevada border.

At the time the Sierras in winter formed an almost insurmountable barrier for the transportation of mail between the Atlantic and Pacific seaboard. Except for a short time in the middle of the summer, when pack-trains known as the "Jackass Express" were able to negotiate the mountain passes, the only way of getting mail to California from the east was across the Isthmus of Panama (or around the tip of South America), which took several months.

In 1851, Major George Chorpenning and his partner, Absalon Woodford had contracted with the government for the delivery of mail across the Sierras. Several trips were made that summer by pack-trains. In the fall of that year Woodford, with a party of carriers, left Salt Lake City for Sacramento, but were never seen alive again.

Meanwhile one party or another had tried to make the crossing, but all had failed. Later that same winter a party of five carriers with ten horses and mules tried to make it from west to east. Fifty-five days later the party tottered into Salt Lake City, frost-bitten and half starved, with the mail bags on their backs and their mounts left dead in the mountains.

In 1855, Major Chorpenning again made an appeal for mail-carriers and Thompson, who had given the problem much thought, became convinced that a carrier mounted on skis could accomplish the task without too much difficulty. In 1856, when another plea for volunteers was made and despite chidings from his many friends, he notified postal authorities that he would take the job.

In preparation for the task he began investigating by summer the various trails and routes leading over to Carson Valley, looking for the most feasible route to follow across the summit of the mountains. He also began studying the various types of skis, and finally decided on skis that were heavier, wider and longer than conventional types.

In order to travel as lightly as possible, he never carried an overcoat or sleeping bag or even a pistol for defense. His only provisions were some slices of bread, dried meat, and crackers. His only other equipment was a pocket-knife, some matches, and a few raw-hide thongs for ski-strap repairs. When the weather became too bad he would build a fire under some overhanging cliff or in a cave and fall asleep with his feet toward the fire.

Thompson made his first trial-run in the early part of January 1857 with 60 pounds of mail on his back. Although he had to weather a blizzard while crossing the summit of the mountains, he made the round trip in six days. After he became more hardened to travel and more familiar with the terrain, he was able to cut the time down to five days. His main

route followed Carson's emigrant trail east from Placerville, a winding course along the rocky chasm of the south fork of the American River.

In 1857, when crossing Hope Valley, he came upon a pack of large timber-wolves devouring a deer carcass they had dug out of the snow, and they began following him. Luckily, though, he had reached the start of a several-mile long downward grade and, as his skis began picking up speed, he soon outdistanced them.

On one of his trips he found a prospector who had lain in his cabin for days, with both feet badly frozen and only raw meat to eat. After getting a fire started, providing him with plenty of firewood, and placing all the food he could find in the cabin within his reach, Thompson set out for Genoa, a day's journey away, where the nearest doctor lived. Here, with the assistance of several others, he improvised a stretcher and brought the man to town.

As the doctor found it necessary to amputate the victim's feet, and the nearest place where chloroform could be obtained was Sacramento, Thompson strapped on his skis and made the 150-mile round-trip for the required drug. The operation was satisfactorily performed and the man lived for many years. While Thompson for eleven years carried the mail across the Sierras on his back, he never received any compensation for his work except the contributions from many of his customers.

In January of 1872 he made a special trip to Washington, D.C. to see postal authorities about getting some pay for his job as a mail-carrier, but here also his pleas were brushed aside with the same answer, "We will see what can be done about it." Nothing ever came of it and he never was paid by the government.

In 1866 Thompson met and married Agnes Singleton. The couple had one son, Arthur, and they continued living in Diamond Valley. In 1875 Thompson's health began to fail. Even after this, though, he made a 5½-hour trek on skis to assist a widow whose son had been seriously injured in a skiing accident. Thompson died in May of 1876 from a liver ailment complicated by pneumonia, and was buried near Genoa, California. In the area where he lived and traveled there are a number of land-marks named in his honor.

Among this generation of relatives of Snowshoe Thompson are Mrs. Hans Wermager, Alfred Thompson and his son, Kenneth.

# The Herald and Other Early Spring Grove Newspapers

The *Spring Grove Herald*, which now probably has next to the largest circulation of any of the newspapers in the county has now been in the hands of the Onsgard family of Spring Grove for sixty-five years and has, since 1895 when the name of the paper was changed from the *Spring Grove Weekly* to its present name, been carried on under the same masthead.

The first attempt to establish a newspaper in the Spring Grove community was made in 1880, when an enterprising young man named Sven Ellestad began publication of a Norwegian weekly called the *Spring Grove Posten*. It was a small folio 10 x 24 inches in size. It came off the press every Thursday and was priced at fifty cents a year. Sven himself was the owner, editor and printer. Most of the editorials were written by a veterinarian of Spring Grove named Matthias Schmidt Nilsen, who had a bent for writing articles for several other Norwegian papers at that time. The paper prospered for a short time but as circumstances did not prove propitious, the paper went out of existence after only a year's struggle and the subscription list was taken over by the Anundsen Publishing Company of Decorah.

The first newspaper in the English language to make its appearance in Spring Grove was the *Spring Grove Weekly*. It was edited by an Englishman named William Smethurst. While no copy of the first edition seems to be in existence it is evident that it had its start in the late fall of 1890. One early copy still extant is Volume 1, Number 1, March 1891, and gives the name of the publishers as Smethurst and Company. Who the silent partners in the firm were is not known with certainty. It is probable that Anton J. Johnson, a prominent farmer in the community, who was a brother-in-law of Mr. Smethurst, may have assisted financially in getting the paper started.

The paper had quite a struggle to stay alive and after a year or so it was sold to another Englishman named Frank Bartholomew. While in Mr. Smethurst's hand, the printing establishment was located in the building now occupied by Stan's Gas and Appliance. After coming into Bartholomew's hands the establishment was moved into a building on the corner of where Hillman's Clothing store is now located. After a while Bartholomew erected a two-story building near the site of what is now the Onsgard Publishing Company. On the first floor was an implement warehouse and the printing shop, and on the second floor was a sort of community hall and opera house.

On April 6, 1893 the building was destroyed by fire, but undaunted Mr. Bartholomew printed a fire-issue and kept the paper going in a tar-paper shack until 1895 when he sold out

to Olaus K. Dahle. After purchasing the *Spring Grove Weekly*, O. K. Dahle erected a one-story building as a printing office. This is the same building which, as we have mentioned, houses the Onsgard Publishing Company. After having published the paper for a while, Dahle changed the name of the paper to the *Spring Grove Herald*—a name which it has retained until this day.

After O. K. Dahle had, in 1900, been elected County Attorney of Houston County he rented the *Herald* to George Drowley of Caledonia, who kept the paper going in 1902. About 1903 he sold the paper to George Kuster, a well-known Houston County educator who was at that time serving as principal of the Spring Grove public schools and who edited the paper until 1905. During the time Kuster had charge of the *Herald* it changed ownership twice: first to an Albert Olsen and then to a harness-maker and businessman in Spring Grove named Even Berg.

In the fall of 1905, the paper was purchased by Ben L. Onsgard, in whose family it has remained since. After taking possession, Mr. Onsgard rented out the paper to different parties until his sons became old enough to take it over, he himself editing it while change of renters was made.

In 1906, J. A. Theisen is listed as editor of the *Herald*. In 1907 it was rented out to Charlie Metcalf, who edited it until 1909; from 1910 to 1913 it was edited by a Carl Olsen; and from 1914 to 1916 Olaf O. Kjome was at the helm. From 1916 to 1918, James Parish of Houston was in charge. Connie Allen, the son of Ole Allen of Spring Grove, served as editor from 1919 to 1925. By this time a son of Ben Onsgard was able to assist his father. Ben and his son Maurice continued in partnership until 1933. Maurice passed away in 1938.

In August 1933 Burnell Onsgard, Ben's son, joined in the partnership. In 1962, Burnell went into partnership with his son Blayne. This marked the beginning of the third generation of the Onsgard family to go into the newspaper business. In 1963, Blayne died and his younger brother Frederick then went into partnership with his father. Since then Burnell and son Frederick have continued publishing the *Spring Grove Herald*.

Bernt Levi Onsgard, better known to the people of the community as Ben Onsgard, a former newspaper man and jeweler in Spring Grove, was born near Beliot, Wisconsin in 1871. He had received his education in the common schools of Rock County, Wisconsin, and the Stoughton Academy. While still in Wisconsin he had learned the jewelry trade, and subsequently he worked at this trade at Blooming Prairie, Minnesota before coming to Spring Grove.

After arriving in Spring Grove he secured employment at Sven Ellestad's music and jewelry store. After working for him a couple of years he bought out his stock of goods and

opened his own jewelry store in Spring Grove. This operated until 1911, when he sold out to Ove Hoegh. As we have mentioned, Mr. Onsgard went into the newspaper business in the fall of 1905 when he purchased the *Spring Grove Herald* but, as he died in 1941, he did not live long enough to see that any of his grandsons would enter the journalistic field.

## PART IV: INDIAN HISTORY

# Indian History of Spring Grove and Houston County Regions

## *Part I: The Prehistoric Indians, The Mound Builders*

For many centuries before the coming of the white man, the upper Mississippi Valley had been inhabited by a race of people who, from their custom of building mounds, have been called the Mound Builders. Many legends have grown up around the Mound Builders, such as that they were a lost or mysterious race, but the truth probably is that they were the immediate predecessors of the Indians with whom the early French explorers in the seventeenth century came in contact, and their mode of living and state of society was not much different from the historic Indians. It is also believed that they were the direct ancestors of the Dakota branch of the great Sioux tribe which had occupied the Minnesota regions for some centuries.

Since prehistoric mounds and artifacts from the mound building period have been found in all parts of the county, we have ample evidence that the Mound Builders also ranged this region. Prehistoric mounds vary in size from almost imperceptible swells in the ground to hillocks more than sixty feet in height and over two-hundred feet in diameter. These ancient mounds provide us with much information concerning a phase of prehistory in the region, which otherwise would be very meager.

Archaeologists have classified prehistoric mounds as round, conical, linear, compound and effigy. The effigy mounds are most interesting as they were built to resemble animals, birds and amphibians. Although not all of the effigies have been found to contain human remains they are believed to have had some significance in the religion of these people.

Ancient mounds were never numerous in Spring Grove Township. When the first settlers arrived in 1852, they found an isolated mound here and there throughout the area, most of which were along the Riceford Creek Valley, but as most of them were hardly more than low ridges and bulges in the terrain, they have by cultivation and erosion obliterated.

In Houston County it is in the township bordering the Mississippi and Root River that most of the evidences of prehistoric man has been found. Before the white man came upon the scene and began disturbing the wilderness, isolated mounds and large mound groupings were very numerous along the lower Root and Iowa River valleys, along the alluvial terraces, along the Mississippi, and on the spurs of the highest bluffs overlooking the great river.

In the examination of the contents of prehistoric mounds we not only find out how these ancient people disposed of their dead, but we get a clue to their food habits, as well as their advancement in the skill of making tools, implements and weapons. As time went on we see that there was great improvement in the art of making pottery—it became more complex and sophisticated with flared rims and flat bottoms. In the mounds have been found hide scrapers, stone hammers, mauls, adzes, arrow head flakers, arrow heads, projectile points, fish hooks, and awls of bone and antler and ornaments.

Although most of the mounds in the Houston County regions were built by people who occupied the area from about 1,000 years ago and almost up to historic times, it is believed that as early as the beginning of the Christian era this area was inhabited by nomadic tribes that depended upon hunting and fishing, and the gathering of wild fruits and nuts for their sustenance, and who came together now and then for communal hunts and religious observances.

As centuries passed these nomadic tribes began to depend more upon agriculture for some of their food supplies. This then resulted in their leading more sedentary lives, as they had to stay around in the fall to harvest what they had planted in the spring.

Before the coming of the white settlers into this region some one-hundred and forty years ago, it has been estimated that there were over 100,000 prehistoric mounds found scattered throughout the upper Mississippi Valley. After settlers began moving into all sections of the region, mass destruction of mounds by cultivation, road building, vandalism and curiosity seekers began to take place. As more and more land was cleared off, erosion and flash flooding also destroyed many of the evidences of ancient man.

There are now few, if any, evidences left in Spring Grove Township of the race which we know as the Mound Builders, who for centuries lived in and ranged this area.

## *Part II: The Sioux*

According to *A History of Minnesota* by William Folwell the first Indians, of whom we have any definite knowledge, to occupy the Minnesota regions were the Sioux. The name Sioux is a corruption of the name Nadowesiw-eg (meaning Snakelike Ones), a name spitefully given them by their traditional enemies, the Chippewa. When the first white men began making their way westward from Sault de Ste Marie, about 1640, they first learned of this great Indian nation of the far west, the Nadowesiw-eg or Sioux.

The great Siouan nation was divided into many branches, all of which occupied the great central plains of the United States. The branch with which we are mostly concerned with

here was the large and powerful tribe called the Dakota, which occupied Minnesota territory. The family name of Sioux is more commonly used than the individual name of Dakota.

When the white man first came in contact with the Sioux, they were living in a stone-age culture using stone implements and weapons. They also belonged to what has been termed the Plains Culture; that is, they depended on the buffalo for their existence. The buffalo furnished them with food, clothing and shelter. They had permanent homes in villages where they lived for long periods of time and they also had temporary homes or encampments when they followed the buffalos as they migrated from place to place.

In 1860, the great French explorer Father Louis Hennepin and his companions made their historic journey down the Wisconsin river to its mouth near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin and then up the Mississippi. They were taken captives by the Sioux somewhere along the great river in southeastern Minnesota and brought to their main village near Lake Mille Lacs. Later that same year they were taken along on a buffalo hunt into southeastern Minnesota where they had temporary encampments along the Root River Valley.

Although the Sioux, as we have mentioned, was a large and powerful tribe, they had to yield to the Chippewa who had obtained the white man's weapons—the steel knife and the musket. By 1750 they had been driven from their ancient homes around Lake Mille Lacs, and by the close of the Revolutionary War there was probably not a single Sioux village left east of the Mississippi and north of St. Anthony Falls.

The Dakota branch of the great Siouan nation which resided in Minnesota territory was divided into several bands which were named after their ruling chiefs. As time went on they also obtained the steel knife and other weapons, and so by more western tribes they became collectively known as the Isanti (Knife Men).

The band which we are mostly concerned with here in southeastern Minnesota was the Mdewakanton. This was the band that had been driven from their ancient homes about Lake Mille Lacs, by the advancing Chippewa. The Mdewakanton had their main village respectively at Anoka, St. Paul, Shakopee, and Red Wing. By the year 1800 they were beginning to concentrate at Winona and ranging the area as far south as the Iowa River Valley. The name Mdewakanton means "The People of Spirit Lake," the Indian name for Lake Mille Lacs.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century and extending into the middle of the nineteenth century, the Mdewakanton band located on the site of Winona was ruled by a dynasty of chiefs named Wabasha or Wapasha (the French rendering was Oubasha). It thus came about that the site of Winona, to fur traders and trappers became known as Wabasha's

Prairie. It is probable that Winona did not become the permanent site of their main village until after the death of Wabasha I in 1805.

The Sioux tribe's connection with the history of Houston County officially came to an end on August 5, 1851 by the Treaty of Mendota, when they reluctantly relinquished title to the last of their land in Minnesota, except for two reservations along the Minnesota River Valley. The Treaty of Mendota was not ratified by Congress until in 1853, and another year had to pass before the Root River Valley was free of Sioux.

### *Part III: The Winnebago Tribe*

Another Indian tribe whose history was connected with the Houston County regions were the Winnebago, who from about 1833 to 1848 were temporary occupants of what was commonly known as the Neutral Grounds. This was an area forty miles north and south and forty miles east and west, lying mostly in Iowa but which took in the southern part of Houston County and the southeastern corner of Fillmore County. This was an area which had in 1830 been set aside as common hunting grounds for a number of neighboring tribes.

The Winnebago was an outlying branch of the Siouan family, and is believed by ethnologists as being an older branch than the Dakotas themselves. This tribe belonged to what has been termed the Woodland Culture; that is, they were skilled in the ways of the woodlands, living in small communities in the deep forests and along the shores and the lakes and the streams in the region, deriving their main sustenance from fish and the small animals living in the woods. They have been described as being experts in warfare, and also skilled in the art of promoting peace.

The name Winnebago is derived from the Indian name Ouinipegou (meaning "ill smelling"), not from any odor peculiar to these people, but from the fact that they came from a region where there was a lake whose water was bad. The Winnebago tribe first came in contact with the white man in 1634, when the French explorer Jean Nicolett paddled his canoes into Green Bay.

Here he was met by a friendly reception from a tribe living in that area, whose language was strange and customs different from that of the Sioux. For over two centuries they continued to live in central Wisconsin until by pressure from other more aggressive tribes, and the westward march of the white man, they were crowded over to the Mississippi.

By various treaties the Winnebago tribe gradually relinquished title to their Wisconsin lands to the whites. By a treaty in 1832 they gave up their land to the south and east of the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers to the white man, and in 1837, by another treaty, they lost the last

of their Wisconsin land. The now homeless tribe was then permitted to make their homes in the so-called Neutral Grounds on the west side of the Mississippi. It thus came about that for the next fifteen years, the story of the Winnebago tribe is interwoven with the history of southern Houston County, the southeastern corner of Fillmore County, and all of Winneshiek County.

Ever since leaving their Wisconsin homes the Winnebagoes were turbulent and dissatisfied, and authorities had much difficulty in keeping them within the boundaries of the Neutral Grounds. It was probably not before 1842 that most of them were concentrated there. As early as 1840 it was becoming apparent that a new place for the tribe had to be found, as whites were beginning to cast longing eyes at this choice Indian land, and the Indians were becoming a nuisance to the whites who had settled near the reservation.

In 1846, the Winnebago tribe reluctantly signed a treaty whereby they agreed to move to a tract of land picked out for them by the government along the Minnesota River, in Morrison, Todd and Stearns counties, in what was known as the Long Prairie County. The tentative time for removal was set for the summer of 1848.

The Winnebago tribes associated with the history of the Houston County regions were short lasting (only about fifteen years), from the time they were permitted to make their homes in the Neutral Grounds until they were removed by force in the summer of 1848. Although the convoy left Fort Atkinson on June 8<sup>th</sup>, the exact date when the cavalcade crossed Spring Grove and Black Hammer Township is not recorded. Probably no more impressive a sight has been observed in our area than this three-mile-long cavalcade slowly making their way northward along the Winona-Fort Atkinson Trail, about a mile west of the village of Spring Grove, thus bringing to a close the Winnebago tribe's connections with this area.

We may add that the Long Prairie regions never satisfied the Winnebagoes. It was a low-lying, fever-infested area that did not have the good hunting and fishing that the sheltered valleys along the Mississippi River had, and they never felt safe in having to serve as a buffer between the Sioux and the Chippewa, who were in almost constant warfare.

#### *Part IV: The Sauk-Fox Tribe*

While they were never residents of Houston County, a few facts about these powerful and warlike tribes will not be out of place, as they did have an effect on the exploration and fur trade in Minnesota, as well as the Indian history of Houston County.

In the regions where they were located they resisted civilization the longest, were the most troublesome, the least understood, and more of a menace to smaller tribes than any other. The Sac (or Sauk) and Fox tribes were members of the great Algonquin Nation which had, in 1760, united into one large tribe called the Fox. About the time of the coming of the first French explorers into the Great Lakes region they were located south of the St. Lawrence Valley, but being warlike and aggressive, they continued conquering their way westward until by the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century they had occupied southwestern Wisconsin, northern Illinois, and had crossed the Mississippi into what is now the state of Iowa. By 1760 they had a large village on the Turkey River near Dubuque, and one on the Rock River, near Rock Rapids. Another large band under the leadership of Poweshiek had their main village on the site of Iowa City, and they had supplanted the Sioux south of the Iowa River. Ten years later they had conquered all tribes from east of the Ohio River.

When the first whites came upon the scene and in contact with the Sauk-Fox tribes, they seem to have shown much friendliness to the explorers and much reverence to the black-robed friars—the Jesuit priests—that accompanied them. Some of the explorers even depended upon these tribes as guides. As time went on they saw that the whites were furnishing guns and other supplies to their enemies, the Sioux. They became jealous, unfriendly and hostile, and they tried to prevent French explorers from entering the Sioux Country (Minnesota). By 1698, they were controlling the Fox's Wisconsin River waterway into Minnesota and were making it difficult to carry on trade with the Sioux and by 1727 they had completely closed the fur-trade route into the Sioux country.

Many efforts were made by the French to pacify or quell the tribe, but to no avail, and it became the policy of the French to exterminate them. In 1729, one hundred of their warriors were slain in an attack on Fort Beauharnois on Lake Pepin and in 1731 a Fox Village east of Prairie du Chien was destroyed by the Iroquois, as they were interfering with the use of the Wisconsin waterway.

In 1831, the Sauks and Foxes, under the leadership of chief Black Hawk, went on the warpath to recover the valley of the Rock River in Illinois, where white settlers had encroached upon Indian lands. The United States government sent out a force under the command of General Henry Atkinson to exterminate this band. By August of 1832, he had Black Hawk and his band backed up against the Mississippi near the mouth of the Bad Axe River in Wisconsin.

The many skirmishes that followed, known as the Black Hawk War, was that of a tribe trying to surrender. Here many were killed or drowned in an effort to get across the river. Of these that managed to get across were later massacred by the Winnebago in the valleys of

Houston and Allamakee counties. A few survivors of the band were later massacred by the Sioux south of the Iowa-Minnesota border.

According to a history of Houston County, a band of Sauks had been allied with the Foxes since 1760. In the summer of 1832 they made a raid on a Sioux village near Money Creek and captured Wah-Kon-de-O-Tah, a Sioux war chief. A bloody battle took place, the maiden was rescued, but there were few Sauks and Foxes to tell of their defeat.

### *Part V: The Chippewa Tribe*

Two terms have been used in referring to this tribe—the Chippewa and the Ojibway. From the similarity of their customs and dances they have been regarded as one group, but some ethnologists believe that at one time there may have been a split off from the Ojibway tribe. The name Chippewa is the one mostly used by historians as well as in governmental publications. Although the Chippewa were not residents of Houston County and never directly connected with its history, they were the ones that drove the Sioux from their strongholds around Lake Mille Lacs and down into southeastern Minnesota and made bloody raids in to the Root River Valley.

An Indian chief of the Winnebago tribe named Big Fire is supposed to have related a story, which had been handed down from father to son for many generations, of a great and bloody battle between the Chippewas and the Sioux in the region between the north fork and middle fork on the Root River, near where the two streams join below Lanesboro. In this encounter the Chippewa are supposed to have been victorious. There are several accounts of this battle recorded. Many evidences have been found to substantiate this chief's story. In various parts of this region have been found Indian remains and many implements of war. In mounds near and on the point between the two streams over six-hundred skeletons have been unearthed.

The Chippewa nation was one of a number of tribes of Algonquin stock residing along the St. Lawrence Valley, who had been driven from their homes further east by the all-conquering Iroquois and who had to seek new homes and hunting grounds beyond Lake Hudson. By the middle of the 16th century the Chippewa had conquered their way south as far as the Crow River in Minnesota. Four divisions of this tribe are connected with Minnesota history, but the detailed story of these tribes do not concern us here in southeastern Minnesota.

The earliest establishment of the Chippewa was about Sault de Ste Marie, the straits between Lake Superior and Lake Huron, where they were for some time free from the

attacks of other tribes and where it appears that they had greatly multiplied. One division of the tribe continued on westward along the north shore of Lake Superior and so out of Minnesota history. What was evidently the main division followed the south shore of the great lake into Minnesota, first as occasional visitors and later to establish homes. As early as 1662 the Chippewas were trading with the French at Kevenaw, and when Father Alleouz in 1665 started a mission at La Point, near Ashland, Wisconsin, he found them occasional visitors there. After the French in 1620 established a permanent post at La Point they concentrated in great numbers there.

History shows that the Chippewas, as a rule, were honest and hospitable in their dealings with the whites. In the French and Indian War they sided with the French. They were harsh and cunning in warfare, and their history is principally a record of those that pressed them from the east and the Sioux that fronted them on the west.

When Charles Le Suer in 1693 became commandant at the French fort near Ashland, Wisconsin, he was instructed by the Governor-General of New France to try and make peace between the Chippewa and the Sioux who had from times immemorial been in constant warfare. As we have mentioned, the Chippewa after having come into the possession of the white man's weapons became very aggressive, and by the seventeenth century had seized the head waters of the Chippewa and St. Croix rivers and had moved rapidly into Minnesota. They had occupied the area near Sandy, Leech and Red lakes. By the time of the Revolutionary War there was not a single Sioux village left north of St. Anthony Falls.

The advance of the Chippewa had not been done without much bloodshed. It has been said that the lands they had conquered were strewn with the bones of their fathers. Most of the Indian warfare consisted of hit and run forays, repeated from year to year without any well-planned campaigns, in which women and children were spared.

In order to keep peace between the Chippewas and the Sioux a treaty was drawn up at Prairie du Chien in 1825, establishing a boundary between the two nations across Minnesota. This boundary extended north-westerly from Stillwater to Moorhead, with all the territory north of the line belonging to the Chippewa. Boundaries between Indian lands were never clearly defined, as the Indians never respected survey stakes, and so whenever possible streams were designated as boundary lines. Of the vast area embracing half of Minnesota that was ranged by the Chippewa, all that is now left is the Red Lake and White Earth reservations. The Chippewa tribe is now a dying race. Those left are now so intermixed with the whites that it is doubtful there is a single purebred Chippewa living in Minnesota.

# First Residents Here May Have Been Mound Builders

This area of southeastern Minnesota was at one time the rendezvous of a people known as the Mound Builders, a race whose story forms an intriguing phase of the prerecorded history of this region. By 1,000 B.C. these ancient people had reached the Great Lakes region and Upper Mississippi Valley. They left no written records, no cuneiform tablets or inscriptions.

Their greatest concentration was along the Upper Mississippi Valley and its tributaries to the east. They developed traits we associate with the American Indians as the first explorers found them. They changed their mode of life from nomadic wanderings to more organized communities, and began to leave evidence of their presence by erecting piles of earth we speak of as Indian Mounds. This was one of their most interesting features. The mounds were burial places, and from the remains in them scientists have been enabled to determine their age.

Until recently there was no way of dating archaeological excavations. They could be measured roughly by correlating artifacts found in one section of the country with that from another, such as identical or similar implements and pottery. Ever since science discovered that the age of once-living things could be measured by the amount of radioactive carbon remaining in them, great strides have been made. When plant or animal life dies, it stops adding to its carbon-14 isotopes and begins the slow process of decay. The length of time since death took place can be measured by the isotope-content in the remains, which fixes its position in the period of history in which the person lived.

Regarded as constituting one of the three races comprised of Mongoloid stock, the Mound Builders are believed to have entered America in small groups via the Bering Strait and perhaps the Aleutian Islands, over a period of several thousand years—roughly contemporaneous with the end of the Paleolithic and the beginning of the Neolithic periods in Europe.

Frederick Webb Hodge, the editor of the *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* said: “The period during which mound building north of Mexico lasted cannot be determined with certainty. That many of the mounds were built a century or two before the appearance of the whites is known from the fact that when first observed they were covered with a heavy forest growth. Nothing, however, has been found in them to indicate great

antiquity, and the present tendency among archaeologists is to assign them to the period subsequent to the beginning of the Christian era.”

Of the many mounds found along the alluvial terraces of the Mississippi River from Winona County south to the mouth of the Iowa River, the greatest concentration in Houston County was found at La Crescent and Hokah. Prehistoric mounds also were numerous in Yucatan Valley. Early settlers spoke of landscape in the valley as being dotted with mounds, most of whose traces now are lost. According to archeological reports, there at one time were over 80 mounds in the La Crescent area and at least 40 in or near Hokah. Of special interest were the bird-effigies found both at Hokah and La Crescent. One of the bird effigies at La Crescent was reported to have been 87 feet long with a wing-span of 225 feet. Since the two villages are only a few miles apart, the supposition is that they were built by the same clan or tribe.

Early archaeological reports of Houston County also cite several intrusive burials. This is where historic Indians made use of ancient mounds for interring their dead. When the railroad was graded through La Crescent in the 1870s, a copper skillet and human remains were uncovered in a mound. The skillet shows that the burial was more recent than the mound and had been made by Indians in contact with Europeans. The remains of a warrior with gun and hatchet were found on a bluff fronting the Mississippi in Jefferson Township. Lower down in the same mound the remains of an Indian of an earlier culture, plus artifacts, were found in a stone crypt.

On top of some of the highest and most prominent bluffs along the Mississippi, low circular mounds have been found. They contained no human remains so may have been sentry-posts. Charcoal and animal bones, probably from campfires and feasts of the watchmen, were left. Without stretching our imagination we may surmise that many smoke signals were sent from these posts warning resident clans of an approaching war-party.

It is known that the custom of building mounds extended through long periods of time and that their contents revealed many stages of culture. They varied in size from hardly noticeable swells in the ground to huge hillocks more than 60 feet in height and several hundred feet across. They were found in many different shapes and have been classified as round, conical, linear, and compound, as well as effigy. The so-called compound mounds are those made up of two or more round or conical mounds connected by linears to form one unit.

The effigies or imitative mounds, built to resemble birds or animals, are restricted to an area in the Upper Mississippi Valley, southern Wisconsin, and the bordering sections of Iowa and southeastern Minnesota. One of the largest bear effigies is at Mounds National Monument near McGregor, Iowa. It is more than 137 feet long and 70 feet across the

shoulder. As all effigies contain human remains, scientists conclude they were built for ceremonial reasons and had some significance in the religion of these primitive people.

There has been much speculation among archaeologists on their significance. McKern, a director of the Milwaukee Public Museum, raised the question: "Why were some individuals honored with a mound to represent a flying bird, while others rested under a walking bear, or some had to be satisfied with a small rounded pile of earth?" Reconstruction of the Mound Builders also has been made through the study of their habitation, their burial sites, and an analysis of community debris.

Of glacial men in Minnesota the barest trace has been made through finding a few ivory artifacts, some skillfully made spear-points and flints, and a few skeletons found several feet below glacial silt on the eastern shores of glacial Lake Agassiz, along the western boundary of the state. Before tribes of Algonquian linguistic stock, such as the Chippewa, Sauk-Fox and other lesser tribes, had worked their way into this region, there is much evidence that a prehistoric people, probably Siouan, had for a long time occupied the Minnesota regions. It is believed that the Isanti, or Santee Dakota, who occupied our area, were descendants of the Mound Builders.

While many things can be learned from cairns, pictographs, ancient trails, and accidentally found artifacts, our principle clues as to how these people lived are obtained from examining objects made by human hands and found in the mounds. From the study of potsherds we can trace their advancement in the art of making pottery. From a variety of hide-scrapers used to prepare skins, and awls used in sewing, we know they made use of hides for both clothing and shelter. By studying the many projectile points found scattered throughout the region we can trace the gradual change from the large, shouldered and barbed arrowheads of more primitive tribes, to the small triangular arrowheads used by historic Indians. They were sometimes notched on both sides.

Scientists have traced the gradual change in food habits of these people from the carnivorous diet of the nomadic hunters who followed the herds, to that of more stable tribes who augmented their food supplies by agriculture. From bone fragments found in ancient campsites we get a clue as to what animals they hunted for food. Or, as one archaeologist put it: "What simmered in their stew pots."

Several stages of culture are recognized by archaeologists who have made a study of the late prehistoric people in the Upper Mississippi Valley. The two main cultures are the Woodland and the Mississippi. A third culture, the Hopewell, which was contemporaneous with and a phase of the Woodland, flourished in the Ohio Valley and westward across the Mississippi into eastern Iowa and southeastern Minnesota. Some of the oldest mounds in

Effigy Mounds National Park near McGregor have been ascribed to the Hopewell. It is believed this culture lasted from 500 B.C. to 500 A.D.

When excavation started in preparation for Interstate 90 near Dresbach, within the last few years, human remains and artifacts of ancient man were uncovered. Evidence indicated they were probably older than the Hopewell culture. The Woodland culture, of which there is much evidence in the northern two-thirds of Minnesota, is believed to have existed up to historic times. As the food habits of the Hopewells did not depend upon agriculture, they did not have as stable a community as the Mississippians who superseded them, and are believed to have been made up of roving bands who came together now and then for communal hunts and religious festivals.

Dr. Lloyd A. Wilford, an archaeologist at the University of Minnesota, states that “while no true Hopewell sites had been found in Minnesota, Hopewell influence has been noted in Minnesota pottery.” In the regions where the Hopewell culture had flourished, it was replaced by the Mississippian. Evidence of the Mississippian culture has been found in Minnesota as far north as Cannon Valley in Goodhue County.

The Mississippians have been called the prehistoric corn farmers, as they had advanced to a stage where they had become dependent upon maize (Indian corn) for their principal food supply. This in turn led to more fixed communities, as what had been planted had to be harvested. The Mississippians also were more advanced in the art of making pottery. They were more complex, having flared rims, angular shoulders, flat bottoms, and most had handles near the top. Their arrowheads had changed from the larger stemmed type of earlier cultures to that of the small triangular points used by the historic Indians. Some of the mounds found along the Cannon River, which have been ascribed to the Mississippians, are believed to be around 1,000 years old.

It has been estimated there was at one time from 8,000 to 10,000 prehistoric mounds in Minnesota. So many now have been destroyed by cultivation, weathering, road-building, and curiosity-seekers, that only a fraction now are left. Since no scientific survey or systematic study of mounds was made before the 1880s, much interesting information as to the story of the Mound Builders is thus lost.

And so reads the fascinating story of a people who, before the coming of the white man, had for centuries occupied this area—a people whose story can only be reconstructed from laborious excavation and patient sifting, to learn how they lived.

# Was This a Busy Indian Highway?

From a time before the recorded history of this area an unusual ancient trail, now nearly obliterated, apparently existed for an unestimated length of time from Winona almost due south to Fort Atkinson, Iowa.

It is surmised that this was an overland trail, running both north and south from these two points, and was first laid out by the ancient Mound Builders, immediate ancestors of the Sioux Indians. It ran through Houston village and Spring Grove in Houston County, and through Decorah and Calmar, Iowa en route to Fort Atkinson. While most Indian trails were only narrow footpaths through the wilderness, this one was as wide as a cart-road and worn deep by much travel and the dragging of tepee poles. Although it was referred to as the Winona-Fort Atkinson Trail, it evidently continued up the valley from Winona.

This trail had been used by the Mdewakantons—more commonly known as the Dakotas—the branch of the great Sioux tribe which had their main village on the site of Winona. The Dakotas used it in traveling between their temporary villages and campsites along the Root River in Minnesota as well as the Iowa and Turkey rivers in Iowa. It also had been used by the Fox-Sauk tribe in raids against the Sioux. The Fox-Sauks were powerful and warlike, boasting of having conquered all tribes on their way westward from the Ohio Valley into Iowa. They had, by 1780, supplanted the Sioux in Iowa Territory.

Over this trail many Chippewa war-parties had traveled in their raids against their traditional enemies, the Sioux. At an earlier time the Chippewa had driven the Sioux from their strongholds around Mille Lacs and into southeastern Minnesota. They continued to harass them until the Sioux were moved out of this area in 1851. Without stretching the imagination we can conclude that the Mound Builders used this trail, for there is much evidence of their having ranged the lower parts of the valleys of the tributaries of the Mississippi River. After the interior of North America came under French sovereignty, this trail was used by French explorers, traders, and Jesuit missionaries. Some of the Jesuit missionaries are known to have worked among the Sioux in southeastern Minnesota.

In the 1830s the Winnebago Indians relinquished all their land in Wisconsin to the whites and were permitted to move to a tract on the west side of the Mississippi, known as the Neutral Grounds. Most of this land was located in Iowa territory but extended into southern Houston and Fillmore counties. In 1840, a fort was built and an Indian agency established near where the trail crossed the Turkey River in southwestern Winneshiek County. The trail then became important as a route of travel by Indians going to the agency for supplies as well as to receive their governmental annuities. When the Winnebagos, in

1848, were moved out of the Neutral Grounds and over to their new reservation near Long Prairie, Minnesota, this trail became the route followed when U. S. troops escorted them from Fort Atkinson to Winona. Here, steamboats were waiting to transport them up the Mississippi to the mouth of the Minnesota River.

This trail figured in the fur trade. During the French period it evidently had been used by the *Coureurs de bois*, the independent traders who lived with and collected furs from the Indians. During the British period it was used by the Indians in bringing their pelts to the fur-marts at Prairie du Chien. After the American Fur Company established headquarters at Prairie du Chien and Henry Mower Rice (later prominent in Minnesota's political history) was assigned the trade with the Winnebagoes, one of his posts was located on this trail, about three miles south of Decorah.

We know that mail-carriers who traveled by foot with mail on their backs between Fort Snelling and Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chien made use of this trail from Winona south to the Root River Valley. Somewhere south of the Root River they left the Winona-Fort Atkinson Trail and continued on along another trail that angled off toward Caledonia. Then, via Portland Prairie, Waukon and Rossville, they reached the mouth of the Yellow River. Military men and scientific explorers also made use of this trail. On a roughly drawn and faded sketch found among the field-notes of Major Stephen H. Long on his expedition into Minnesota in 1823, it appears that he traveled this trail during part of his journey from the Iowa line and north to Winona.

When settlers began moving into southeastern Minnesota in the early 1850s, many of them took advantage of this trail in scouting for eligible home-sites. Several settlers from Spring Grove traveled over this trail from the already established settlements in Iowa into Minnesota territory. They came in covered-wagons drawn by oxen. We also have records of millwrights following this trail while in search of mill-sites in Houston County. In public documents we find government officials, surveyors and men connected with Indian affairs referring to it as the "Government Trail." When roads were being laid out in Spring Grove Township in territorial days, one road was named the Indian Trail Road, as for some distance it followed this ancient trail.

Although southeastern Minnesota ceased to be Indian territory in 1851, early settlers told of seeing long caravans of Indians marching along this trail in the middle 1850s. It is now over a century ago since the redmen trod this trail, and most vestiges of its course have been obliterated by time, erosion, cultivation and road building. Only in a few places can traces of the trail still be found, and only by much research can its approximate course be determined. Very little information seems to be available as to its location from Winona to the head of

Money Creek Valley. It appears to have descended down to Wabasha's Prairie (the present Winona) from the ridge between Gilmore and West Burns valleys.

We do know that it went down the Money Creek Valley and crossed the Root River below Houston. It then continued up the South Fork Valley, but we are not sure whether it went up as far as Yucatan or if it went up the Beaver Valley toward Black Hammer. From the Black Hammer-Spring Grove Township line and south we are on more sure ground, as more information is available of its exact course.

After entering Spring Grove Township, it went on south along the east-quarter section-line of Section 4, then southward, crossing Highway 44 below the underpass; skirted the bluff east of the former village of Newhouse, and crossed the state line in Section 33. It continued on across Highland Township toward Locust and on to Decorah via the ghost town of Spring Water, the Skyline Road, and Cruson's Hollow, crossing the Iowa River near the twin bridges in the northeastern section of the city. From there to Fort Atkinson it is supposed to have followed the same course as the old highway between the two towns, through Calmar.

While information on parts of the once famous Winona-Fort Atkinson Trail are very scant, it is probable that persons acquainted with the early history of the townships through which it passed could add much to the fascinating story of this ancient historic Indian roadway.

# How the Whites Forced the Indians to March

It is 116 years ago last week since the Winnebago Indians were evicted from southeastern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa. The story of this dramatic episode, where a whole tribe was transferred in one mass-movement out of this region, is one of the interesting chapters in the Indian history of this area.

On June 8, 1848, a cavalcade several miles long slowly wended its way northward from Fort Atkinson, Iowa to Winona. The uneasy procession of about 3,000 redskins and whites, plus over 2,000 animals, was the most colorful and spectacular sight ever witnessed in this area. It is regrettable that photography had not yet advanced to a stage where this scene could have been perpetuated for posterity.

The Winnebago tribe was an outlying branch of the great Siouan family, which when first contacted by the early French explorers was congregated in the Green Bay area. By the beginning of the 1830s they were crowded over to the Mississippi River by pressure from other more aggressive tribes and the westward march of the white man.

In 1837, they ceded the last of their Wisconsin lands to the whites and agreed to move to and occupy a portion of tract on the west side of the Mississippi known as the Neutral Grounds. This was an area, located mainly in Iowa but extending into Houston and Fillmore counties, set aside as common hunting grounds for a number of neighboring tribes.

The Winnebagoes association with the history of this area covers little more than a decade from the time the Indians relinquished the last of their Wisconsin lands, until their removal from the Neutral Grounds. Transferring the tribe here was only a temporary arrangement to provide a haven for these homeless people until a more permanent place could be found.

As the Winnebagoes were reluctant to leave their Wisconsin homes, it was not before about 1842 that most of them had become established in the neutral territory. While located here they were dissatisfied and turbulent. At no time were authorities able to keep them all inside the boundaries of the reservation—as Indians did not respect boundaries, some drifted into Sioux territory in northern Houston and southern Winona counties, and some wandered back to their former haunts in Wisconsin. They also became very troublesome to the whites who had established settlements—slaughtering their livestock, helping themselves to crops, and by incessantly begging for food and clothing.

Records from Fort Atkinson show the garrison there was kept busy rounding up stray Indians and settling boundary disputes. Not all these disputes were caused by the Indians;

the whites were casting longing eyes at the land inside the reservation, and were beginning to encroach upon it. By 1845 it was becoming apparent that the Winnebagoes would have to be moved to some other place. To relieve the whites from the troublesome natives and gratify the red-skins' passion for wandering, a plan was conceived to transplant them to a reservation in central Minnesota where for the time being they wouldn't trouble the settlers. To locate them there also involved a scheme to have them serve as a buffer-band between the Sioux and the Chippewa, who were in constant warfare.

On October 23, 1846, a treaty was concluded with the Winnebagoes in which they ceded the Neutral Grounds to the whites and agreed to accept a tract of over 800,000 acres north of the Minnesota River, in Morrison, Todd and Stearns counties, known as the Long Prairie Reservation. The treaty was ratified by the U. S. Senate in 1847 and arrangements for their removal in 1848 were started, the tentative date being set for June 6th.

As the time for their removal approached, the Indians showed an unexpected reluctance to leave. They objected to being made a buffer between the Sioux and the Chippewa, for fear of being destroyed, and they had been frightened by rumors that the Long Prairie region was a fever-infested area. This region also lacked the rich hunting-grounds and natural attractions of southeastern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa. Also, certain fur-traders encouraged them to resist.

When the Winnebagoes were moved into the Neutral Grounds, an effort had been made to confine them in the western portion in order to keep them as far away as possible from the whisky-selling traders along the Mississippi. It thus came about that small bands were located along the Riceford and South Fork valleys and along the Iowa River on the site of Decorah. The greatest number was concentrated along the Turkey River near the Winnebago agency and mission-school. They were especially numerous in that area during the time of the year when they were paid their annuities. Here they stayed, refusing to hunt or fish, but gorging themselves with food bought at the Agency as long as the money lasted. Here they spent their time in riotous drinking orgies with whiskey obtained from licentious fur-traders.

The actual work of conveying the Winnebagoes to Long Prairie, a distance of about 300 miles, was left to Captain Morgan, a commander at Fort Atkinson, Jonathan E. Fletcher, a Winnebago Indian agent, the Rev. David Lowry, head of the Winnebago mission school, and Henry Mower Rice, a trusted friend of the Winnebagoes. Rice had selected the site for their new homes. The plan decided upon was to go overland to Winona, then by steamboat to Fort Snelling, then overland to their destination.

Trouble was experienced from the start. An entire band had deserted and gone down into Iowa. Some had wandered back into Wisconsin. All had to be rounded up before the

journey could get under way. On the appointed day, soldiers had all the Indian belongings loaded into wagons furnished by the government and had everything in readiness to leave, but the Indians became rebellious. They angrily unloaded the wagons and refused to budge.

This alarmed Captain Morgan, who had only 90 armed men and was outnumbered about ten to one, but as the Indians had to depend upon the whites for food, they finally came to terms after being supplied with liberal allowance of beef. It was not before June 8th that the almost three-mile-long procession got started. The exact number of Indians in the tribe at the time of their removal is not known. However, history says they comprised 24 bands. Their total number has been variously estimated at from 2,500 to 2,800.

From reliable sources, it appears the cavalcade that left Fort Atkinson on the morning of June 8, 1848, was made up of about 2,500 Indians, 1,600 ponies, several hundred cattle, 166 covered Army wagons, 500 tents, two cannons drawn by oxen, a detachment of 90 men under Captain Morgan, and about twice that number of civilians. Although the distance to Winona was less than 100 miles, so many events took place along the way, it took three weeks for this part of the journey.

The first and second days across Winneshiek County were made without incident. On the third night, an Indian died and a stop was made the next day for the burial, with all the ceremonies of the tribe. Since this region was at that time wild and uninhabited we have no exact way of knowing where this happened. It is known that the cavalcade made an overnight stop near a large spring about a mile south of the state line, in what is now Section 16, Highland Township. Early settlers spoke of an Indian burial place near the trail at this point, so we may safely assume this is where the ceremony took place. After this the Indians became more untoward and restless, and some difficulty was experienced in getting them going again.

The Root River was reached after seven days of travel. A stop of five days was decided upon as the Indians had assumed a more mutinous attitude after entering the Sioux country north of the Neutral Grounds. Teamsters made good use of this stop to mend wagons, harnesses and other equipment. A squad of soldiers spent two days in rounding up a few Indians who had wandered off into the nearby valleys while the cavalcade was crossing what is now Black Hammer and Yucatan townships.

One of the Winnebago chiefs named Little Hill, who was friendly to the whites, warned Captain Morgan that things would get worse as they neared Winona, the main village of the Sioux under Chief Wabasha. He also informed Morgan of a well-verified report that Wabasha's band planned to join the Winnebagoes to overpower the whites when they reached Wabasha's Prairie. After obtaining this information, Morgan called another ten-day halt. Heeding to Little Hill's warning, he sent word to Fort Snelling and Fort Crawford for

reinforcements without telling the tribes. Messengers returned with word that Captain Seth Eastman from Fort Snelling, with 60 northern Sioux and 40 regulars and a contingent from Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chien under Captain H. Knowlton, would be at Winona to meet him.

While waiting near the Root River, a party of Sioux appeared and threatened dire consequences if the cavalcade continued over Sioux territory, but Morgan preconceived this was only a ruse to dispel suspicion of collusion between Sioux and Winnebago. A band of young Winnebago braves also escaped across the river and lay in ambush, threatening to shoot the first one to cross, but Morgan, a man not easily daunted, ordered the cavalcade to proceed and the march to Winona continued without incident.

Serious trouble resulted after the strange procession reached Wabasha's village and the Winnebagoes began associating with the Sioux. As the Sioux incited them to resist, they became very rebellious and war-like and refused to embark on the steamboat awaiting them. As trouble had been expected, Morgan pitched his camp some distance from that of the Indians to fortify and prepare himself against any Indian attack.

A barricade was set up by placing all the wagons in a semicircle leading up to the boat landing. Inside the circle were Morgan's men with guns and carbines ready for action. Arrangements completed, a detachment of soldiers was sent to the Indian encampment, ordering them to come and be prepared to embark. They came, but not in the way expected. Instead, they dashed into sight in full war regalia in a furious charge against Morgan's barricade, but stopped crestfallen when they found themselves facing the infantry and cavalry, with guns pointed. Seeing the futility of further resistance they agreed, after a brief parley, to embark.

Little Hill and his band were the first to board. As the steamboat left the dock, the rebellious bands hooted and howled their disapproval. By the time the boat returned from Fort Snelling, about 1,700 more had come to terms. As the steamboat *Doctor Franklin* was small, several trips had to be made. Not before the end of July had most of them been transferred to the fort for the overland journey to Long Prairie.

Not all of them could be persuaded to go. One chief with his band escaped into Wisconsin, and some went down into Iowa and mingled with tribes in that region. The Long Prairie country never satisfied them, and at no time were they all collected there. The more the government and the Indian agent did for them, the more dissatisfied they became. Some of them drifted back to their former haunts in Wisconsin, some went back into the Neutral Grounds in southeastern Minnesota, and others strung out along the Mississippi River.

In the winter of 1850 the governor of Wisconsin called on governor Ramsey of Minnesota, moved by a petition of citizens complaining of the nuisances and depredations committed by the scattered bands of Indians, and asking that steps be taken to take them back to their reservation. The Secretary of Interior and Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Orlando Brown of Kentucky, took immediate action. As no white man had such influence over the Winnebagoes as Henry Mower Rice, they awarded him a contract to round up all the stray Indians at \$70 per head.

The letting of this contract to Mr. Rice caused much wrangling and ill feeling in Minnesota political circles as the price per head was at least three times what it would cost, and Mr. Rice had requested that the contract should be kept secret. While Rice made money on the contract, it cost him the friendship and confidence of the Winnebago tribe, for in their dealings with the white man, he had been their most trusted friend. In order to find a place more to their liking, Governor Gorman and the Indian agent John Fletcher negotiated a treaty with the Sioux by which they would have transferred to a tract fronting the Mississippi between the Crow and Clearwater rivers, but it was not ratified by Congress.

On February 27, 1855, a new treaty was drawn up which exchanged the Long Prairie Reservation and \$70,000 in cash for a smaller tract of 18 square miles on the Blue Earth River near Mankato. This was ratified March 3, 1855. Here Fletcher tried without success to have them lead an agrarian life. In 1863, when plans were being made to move both the Sioux and the Winnebagoes out of Minnesota, the Winnebago consented to being moved to a reservation on Crow Creek on the Missouri River in South Dakota. After three years in this inhospitable region they were moved to a tract in Nebraska, known as the Black Bird Reservation, near the Sioux reservation on the Niobrara River. Here some of their descendants still live.

Many Winnebagoes drifted back to their former homes in Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota, where some of them were still living along the Root River and its tributaries when the first settlers arrived in 1852-53. Finally, in 1875, the Winnebagoes were given certain homestead rights in Wisconsin. Now many of them live in Black River Falls, Tomah and other areas of the state, where they have begun reorganizing their tribe.

# Afterword

by *Chad Muller*

I hope you have enjoyed this collection. While researching material for a pictorial history of Spring Grove I came across these “sketches” in a dusty, yellowed scrapbook that town-historian Georgia Rosendahl had tucked away. The articles, the deeper I sank into them, fired my imagination. I could see the people and feel the old environments that Mr. Narveson so vividly described.

Percival Narveson had much in common with his uncle Peter J. Rosendahl, the creator of the comic-strip *Han Ola og Han Per*. They not only got together nearly every Sunday for a game of chess at Rosendahl’s farm, but were both interested in telling stories. And while their mediums were vastly different, they were concerned with preserving this area’s colorful history.

From the late 1950s and into the early 1970s, Narveson wrote the articles collected in this volume at his home in Spring Grove. They were published in the Sunday edition of the *Winona Daily* newspaper in nearby Winona, Minnesota, as well as in the *Spring Grove Herald*. Though these are the majority of his historical writings, Narveson also wrote many articles for the Trinity Lutheran church-bulletin in Spring Grove, and was keenly interested in recording his own genealogy.

In case you were wondering, that is indeed Mr. Narveson on the cover and title-page. For most of his professional life he was a stone-mason. When he retired in the 1950s, he did not stop building. With paper and pen he put together the history of this area, sketch by sketch. His close relationship with family and friends, and his interest in the stories they told, were behind much of his writings. He was an intensely curious man, who loved to talk history with anyone who was willing to listen.

Percival Narveson gave us the brickwork and created an incredible foundation from which to understand our past. The purpose of this collection is to revive the work of one of Spring Grove’s most gifted storytellers. I hope it has fired your imagination to a time and a place now long gone.

# Name Index

- Aaes, Rev. Vernon — 35  
Aamodth, Thosten — 51  
Aiken, Elsie — 42  
Aiken, Francis — 2, 36  
Aiken, Samuel — 36  
Akre, John — 29  
Allen, Connie — 77  
Allen, Ole — 77  
Amray, George — 28  
Anderson, Albert — 26  
Anderson, Bruun (Brown) — 21, 26  
Anderson, Mons — 24  
Andrews, Burtron — 43  
Ardinger, Ralph — 39  
Bagley, Milton — 34  
Bagley, Orson — 44  
Bagley, Oscar — 34  
Bakke, Hans — 19  
Banning, William — 12, 37  
Barker, Lewis — 42  
Bartholomew, Frank — 76  
Batchellor, Dr. Alexander — 48  
Beeby, Taylor — 13, 37, 43-44, 46  
Bennett, J. R. — 2  
Benson, Embrick — 62  
Berg, Prof. K. — 70  
Berg, Even — 77  
Berg, Ole — 19  
Berg, Tollef Amundsen — 19  
Bergh, Thore — 26  
Bergo, Knud — 19, 30, 59  
Bergsrud, Helge — 33  
Bernatz, Anthony — 43  
Bernatz, George — 43  
Bernatz, Michael — 13, 43  
Berquam, Bottolf — 33  
Berquam, Iver — 33  
Berquam, Johannes — 33  
Berquam, Ole — 33  
Billings, Julius — 33  
Birdsell, John — 33  
Birdsell, William — 42  
Bjertness, Elling — 33  
Bjore, Helge — 33  
Blexrud, Berthe Maria — 71  
Blinn, John — 12  
Bondelie, Johannes — 51  
Bradford, William — 42  
Brandt, Rev. Nils — 35, 46, 70  
Breen, Rev. Borg — 35  
Brenna, Rev. O. C. — 50  
Brenner, Otto — 26  
Brown, Charles — 41-42, 58  
Brown, Jobe — 10, 41, 46, 53, 58  
Budahl, Lars — 25  
Bunnell, William — 3  
Burtness, Carl — 50  
Burtness, Olaus — 49-50  
Burtness, Osten — 33  
Bye, Ole — 29, 48  
Callahan, Michael — 29  
Cameron, Peter — 56  
Campbell, Paul — 52  
Carrier, Peter — 33  
Carrier, Silas — 33  
Carrier, William — 33  
Carver, George — 29  
Chase, Dr. — 59  
Chatfield, Orin — 42  
Cheeseboro, Palmer — 54  
Cheeseboro, William — 54  
Christophersen, Christ — 45  
Clausen, Rev. F. C. — 23-24, 35, 50, 69  
Clausen, Hans — 28  
Cluss, John — 26  
Coffee, Edward — 44

Colt, Martin — 43  
Craig, John — 42  
Cratte, Oliver — 52  
Crist, Benjamin — 45  
Crompton, A. — 43  
Dahl, Even Ellertson — 18  
Dahl, J. A. — 44  
Dahle, Andrew — 49  
Dahle, Knud — 48  
Dahle, O. K. — 77  
Dahler, Sophia — 26  
Demeron, James — 20, 24  
Demeron, Nick — 24  
Doely, Ingvald Throndsen — 51  
Drowley, George — 77  
Dusterud, Herman — 51  
Dvergsten, Julius — 38  
Dyer, John — 45  
Edgers, George — 29  
Eide, Jacob — 49  
Eiken, Torjus — 33  
Ekse, Nils — 33  
Elemoen, Jens — 19  
Elemoen, Thore Jensen — 19  
Ellestad, Sven — 21, 25, 43, 76-77  
Ellested, Haaken — 51  
Ellingsen, Elling — 19  
Ellingsen, Hans — 19, 38  
Enderud, Embrick Benson — 19  
Engell, Christian — 21, 26  
Engen, Ole — 51  
Espelund, Christian — 44  
Evenson, James — 35  
Evenson, Sigurd — 34  
Everett, Frank — 38  
Ericksen, Kristopher — 33  
Findreng, Lars — 33  
Fladager, Henry — 24  
Fladager, Martin — 24  
Fladager, Maurice — 20, 24  
Fladager, Mons — 7, 20, 23-24  
Fladager, Peter — 24

Flaskerud, Elling — 26  
Flaten, Fingal Aslesen — 19  
Flemming, Chandler — 33  
Fleming, William — 20, 23  
Foss, Anders — 55, 65  
Foss, Eddie — 37, 39  
Foss, Mons — 65  
Fossum, Ove — 40  
Frost, Rev. Hemming Hanson — 35  
Frink, William — 54  
Gilbertson, Andrew — 44  
Gilbertson, Gulbrand — 44  
Gilbertson, Knud — 19  
Gilbertson, Teman — 19, 21, 23-24  
Gilmore, Robert — 43  
Glasrud, Christian — 51  
Glasrud, Peter — 34  
Goodno, Olaf — 28  
Gribbin, Patrick — 12  
Gribbin, Peter — 12  
Guberud, Gulbrand — 51  
Gullingsrud, Steingrim — 44-45  
Gunderson, John — 28  
Guttormsen, Knud — 33  
Haecker, T. L. — 28  
Haga, Truls — 19  
Hagen, Anders — 51  
Hallan, Albert — 38  
Hallan, Andrew — 38-39  
Hallan, Johannes — 36  
Hallan, John — 38  
Halbakken, Ole — 51  
Halstenrud, Lars Reiersen — 19, 69, 71  
Halstenrud, Reier Larson — 69  
Halvorson, Asle — 21, 26  
Halvorson, Thor — 69  
Hanny, Jackson — 43  
Hanson, Bernt — 34  
Hanson, Hans — 34  
Hanson, Rev. Richard — 50  
Hartman, George — 43  
Hasledalen, Ole — 21, 26

Haugen, Knud — 48  
Haugen, Ole — 49  
Haugstad, Albert — 49  
Hefte, Olaus — 49  
Hemri, Ole — 33  
Hendrickson, Nels — 20, 25  
Hilden, Hans — 26  
Hillman, Robert — 20, 24  
Hinkley, Dr. F. B. — 63  
Hinkley, William — 20, 23, 44  
Hoegh, Charles — 21, 26  
Hoegh, Ove — 78  
Hoime, Even — 19, 44  
Hollum, Elling — 33  
Houston, Sam — 57-58  
Howe, Hiram — 31  
Ike, Iola — 35  
Ike, Martin — 35  
Ike, Cecelia — 32  
Ike, Knud Olsen — 32, 35  
Iverson, Ole — 21, 63  
Jackson, Charles — 53  
Jackson, Jack — 53  
Jackson, Issac — 44  
Jacobson, Thron — 34  
Jensen, Rev. Eskild — 35  
Jensen, Dr. Thor — 5, 21, 25  
Jetson, Joseph — 38  
Joerg, Frank — 68  
Johnson, Anton — 76  
Johnson, Berge Floberg — 26  
Johnson, Iver — 26  
Johnson, O. S. — 4, 8, 48  
Johnson, Rev. K. Roger — 50  
Johnson, Rev. Richard — 35  
Johnsrud, Haavel — 51  
Jome, Lars — 51  
Jorgenson, Peder — 26  
Kaasa, Ole — 10  
Kasberg, Rev. Carl — 35  
Karlsbratten, Erik — 34  
Kelly, Charles — 29, 48

Kieland, Elling — 19  
Kieland, Haaken — 21, 25  
Kieland, Knud Knudson — 19, 68  
King, Dr. Frank — 43  
Kinneberg, Iver — 51  
Kittilsland, Ole Tollefsrud — 17  
Kjome, Olaf — 77  
Kjos, Ole — 26  
Kjun, Adam — 36  
Kopang, John — 50  
Koren, Rev. V. — 35  
Kripp, John — 54  
Krogstad, Ole — 61  
Kroshus, Anders — 19  
Krugmire, Ivan — 13  
Kuster, George — 77  
Lamb, Abijah — 36  
Lamen, Christian — 33  
Larsen, Laur — 71  
Larson, Rev. R. R. — 35  
Lee, Rev. Clarence — 50  
Lee, Cyrus — 40  
Lee, Ole — 38-39  
Lee, Orlando — 38-39  
Lewis, Burt — 36  
Lie, Halvor — 33, 51  
Lien, John — 38, 39  
Lunde, Amund — 51  
Luttman, Charles — 13, 43  
Loing, Harry — 45  
Loing, Herman — 45  
Lommen, Georgina — 48  
Lommen, Gjermund — 48  
Lommen, John — 19  
Lommen, Peter Johnson — 19  
Lommen, Tosten Johnson — 33  
Looney, John — 58  
Lore, Edward — 58  
Lore, Seth — 58  
Magnusson, Bennie — 27  
Magnusson, Christine — 28  
Magnusson, Magnus — 27

Mathison, Gunder — 34  
McCabe, John — 32  
McCormick, Robert — 20, 22  
McDonald, James — 23  
McIntire, Edmund — 55  
McIntire, Samuel — 14  
McKennty, J. H. — 2  
McMichaels, Alec — 37  
McMichaels, George — 37  
McMichaels, Tom — 37  
McPhail, Samuel — 58  
McSpadden, William — 58  
Metcalf, Charlie — 77  
Muller, Adolph — 5  
Muller, Ingvald — 4, 21, 26  
Mokasten, Andrew Peterson — 38  
Montgomery, John — 36  
Morken, Hans — 28  
Morken, Ole — 28  
Mosher, Almon — 43  
Munns, John — 42  
Myhre, Ole Knudson — 51  
Myrah, Gulbrand Nielson — 19  
Myrah, Hans — 19  
Myten, Even — 38  
Myten, Otto — 38  
Narveson, Cornelius — 69  
Narveson, Haaken — 19, 69  
Narveson, Narve — 25  
Nelson, O. B. — 22, 39  
Newhouse, Ole — 39  
Newhouse, Peter — 37, 38, 39  
Newhouse, Theodore — 49  
Newhouse, Tollef — 36, 59  
Newport, Leander — 36  
Nielson, Ingeborg — 18  
Nilsen, Mathias — 32  
Nilsen, Mathias Schmidt — 21, 25, 76  
Nilson, Christian — 26  
Nye, Dr. George — 44-45  
Oatman, Henry — 13, 43-44  
Ober, Joseph — 14

Olen, L. B. — 28  
Oleson, Louis — 49  
Oleson, Mary — 50  
Olsen, Albert — 77  
Olsen, Carl — 77  
Olsen, Halvor — 33  
Olson, Ole — 33  
Olstad, Jens Jacobson — 40  
Onsgard, Christian — 25  
Onsgard, Ben — 77  
Onsgard, Blayne — 77  
Onsgard, Burnell — 77  
Onsgard, Frederick — 77  
Onsgard, Nels — 21, 25  
Onstad, Per — 33  
Opheim, Embrick Knudson — 4, 19, 23  
Oseth, Gunder — 51  
Ostern, Johan — 51  
Ostby, David — 51  
Otterness, Guttorm — 33  
Otterness, Jens — 33  
Pagel, Paul — 28  
Parish, James — 77  
Parker, Laura — 26  
Passmour, P. B. — 37  
Paulsen, Truls — 19, 21, 22  
Pendergast, Father — 46  
Peterson, Charles — 29  
Peterson, Hans — 29  
Peterson, Henry — 29, 34  
Pope, Dr. John Edwin — 59  
Pope, Dr. Timothy — 59  
Prentis, Joseph — 23  
Prentis, Pauline — 23  
Prestseter, Hans — 10, 28  
Preston, Luther — 42  
Prolow, Edward — 39  
Quale, Ole — 49  
Quanrud, Hans — 38  
Quarve, George — 19  
Quarve, Levor Temandson — 19  
Quinnell, Martin — 49

Raccicot, Oliver — 52  
Ramstad, Jens — 13  
Randall, David — 44  
Rank, John — 45  
Rank, Peter — 45  
Rask, Peter — 51  
Reynolds, C. — 44  
Rice, E. M. — 46  
Rice, Henry Mower — 2, 57  
Rigs, Mr. — 44  
Reierson, Elling — 21, 25  
Reierson, Steiner — 21  
Reme, Mikkel — 24  
Reque, Rev. Paul — 35  
Reque, Rev. S. S. — 35, 69-70  
Rice, Henry Mower — 41  
Richards, Benjamin — 36  
Richmond, William — 54  
Robinson, Mrs. James — 48  
Roble, Endre — 51  
Roneberg, Martin — 60  
Roppe, Ole — 21, 38  
Rosaaen, Torkel Ageson — 32  
Rosendahl, Gunhild — 7  
Rosendahl, Hans — 19  
Rosendahl, Paul — 19  
Ross, John — 52, 56  
Ross, Samuel — 52, 56  
Rowe, William — 13, 37, 44  
Royce, James — 26  
Rust, Rev. Obert — 35  
Sadd, Leonard — 28  
Sagedalen, Knud — 19  
Sagedalen, Ole — 19  
Sandness, Ole — 51  
Schansberg, Christian — 26  
Schansberg, Haaken — 26  
Schansberg, John — 26  
Schech, Edward — 12  
Schech, Elenor — 13  
Schech, Joseph — 12  
Schech, Michael — 12

Schneider, J. — 26  
Schwarzhoff, Joseph — 10, 27-28, 56  
Selland, Nils — 51  
Sheldon, Dr. James Giles — 59  
Sheldon, Julius — 59  
Sherburne, William — 44  
Sherwood, Daniel — 43  
Simpson, Alexander — 33  
Singleton, Agnes — 75  
Smerud, Gustav — 28  
Smethhurst, William — 76  
Smith, Alvin — 33  
Smith, James — 2, 17, 20-22, 25-26, 59  
Smith, T. C. — 20  
Solandsen, Engebret — 51  
Solberg, Anders — 68  
Solberg, Anna — 68  
Solberg, Helge — 31, 33  
Solberg — 26  
Solie, Carl — 49  
Soper, David — 32  
Soper, Philander — 32  
Solum, Hans — 5  
Sorem, Soren Olsen — 18  
Stabo, Dr. Thron — 5, 25  
Stenehjem, Asbjornson — 50  
Stengen, Mathias — 49  
Stenholt, Lars — 26  
Stenrodden, Erik — 49  
Stenrodden, Ole — 24  
Stensrud, Ole Christiansen — 4, 5, 19, 24  
Stensrud, Live — 5  
Stevens, Edwin — 31-32, 55  
Storlie, Martin — 25, 38  
Strong, Herbert — 43  
Svartaas, Lars — 33  
Tannen, Gunerious — 32  
Tanner, Michael — 29, 48  
Tart, J. C. — 20  
Tendeland, Torger Johannsen — 17-19  
Theisen, J. A. — 77  
Thompson, Alfred — 75

Thompson, Arthur — 75  
Thompson, Edward — 13, 43  
Thompson, John — 44  
Thompson, John Rue (Snowshoe) — 73  
Thompson, Kenneth — 75  
Thompson, Thomas — 73  
Thompson, Thorstein — 73  
Thompson, Rev. Jesse — 35  
Tingerson, Ellef — 26  
Tollefson, Ellef — 38, 44  
Tone, Ole — 21, 22  
Torgenrud, Peter Halvorsen — 23, 51  
Traaen, Gunder — 19  
Trehus, Endre — 51  
Trostheim, Erik — 24  
Tune, Roe — 61  
Tweeten, Tove — 51  
Tweito, Nels — 19  
Ulen, Ole — 19  
Valder, Hans — 45

Vale, John — 19  
Valle, Ole Halverson — 17  
Van Doren, William — 41  
Valtinsen, Valtin — 30, 33  
Velo, Elias Molee — 22  
Vick, Maurice — 49  
Walhus, Arnold — 31  
Waller, Simon — 36  
Walsh, John — 24  
Wein, Rev. H. J. — 50  
Wermager, Mrs. Hans — 75  
Wermager, Henry — 49  
West, Elijah — 33  
Wilcox, George — 44, 46  
Wilson, Allan — 43  
Winjum, Jens — 33  
Wing, David — 45  
Wold, Knud Olsen — 19  
Yitrelie, Ole — 33