

## THE BERDAHL FAMILY

By Andrew Johannesen Berdahl (1848-1940)

Our genealogy can be traced back to about 1750 in church records, and since that time the farm Berdal in Feios, on the Sognefjord has succeeded from father to son to the present time. But for the information of the younger Generation it will be sufficient to go back to my grandparents Erick Olson and Kristi Berdal born in the 1780's - or 90. Their children were Ole, Thrina, Johannes & Anna. Ole being the oldest succeeded to the farm according to the old law called Odelstret by paying a certain Annuity to the parents for life after in their retirement. Very little was paid to the younger brothers and sisters, who had to find employment where ever they could after becoming of age, or before.

Of the above named Johannes became my father. He was born in Oct. 1822. After his parents death which occurred within a few days of each other, and both buried in the same day, as I heard father relate it, and after the estate was settled up and his brother Ole had taken over the farm, he got employment on some rich peoples estate in a neighboring community on the opposite side of the fjord, called Systrand, later and now called Leikanger. While there and upon becoming of age he was drafted into the regular Army, (all able-bodied young men according to law were liable for army service). In peacetime the service consisted of being at some Army camp for drill 8 to 10 weeks each summer for 5 years. The next 5 years he was still a Soldier with the reserves, but no time spent for drill. The first 5 years in the Army was a costly affair for the young men who lost so many weeks of pay because of this Soldiering. As a Soldier there was no pay except the uniform. And that they had to keep neat and clean and wear it to church every Sunday-(Whether this requirement was for the first 5 years only or for the 10 years I never learned)-

In this community, Systrand, father was married to Kristi Andersdatter Henjum.

Her father, Anders Henjum, had been acting Lensmand, which office represents somewhat our two offices of Sheriff and County Judge. It has been related that he was a well educated and very intelligent man. A peacemaker in his district but had died when mother was only 12 years old.

Her mother, name Martha, lived until after we came to America. It was in 1861 I think we received notice of her death. My grandparents family on mothers side consisted of 2 sons and 4 daughters. The 2 sons and youngest daughter died in Norway, but 3 daughters came to America. Kristi, my mother; Britha, Mrs. Loftness and Synneva unmarried, These were with us in the pioneer days of Minnehaha Co.

After my parents marriage they went to Fjaerland. Father had accepted a position to be manager of the farm Jorddal in this community- As I remember it related he was there manager 2 or 3 years, the estate being settled up, the one who became owner took charge. So now having no means to buy any place he accepted a place on the same farm as a Husman. A Husman a renter of a small tract of ground with buildings for the family and a stable for a cow or two, a couple of sheep and perhaps a pig. The rent was to be paid in certain days of labor at such times as the owner needed help,- in seeding, haying and harvest and possibly at other times. In the mean time his rented ground would be planted to such crop as was needed for the household. Hay needed for what animals they had was found high up in the mountains, where the grass was cut, tied into bundles and rolled down to the sea, carried in a boat to the home and hung up on a sort

of fence to dry. Not a very easy life!

Here on the Jorddal farm my parents lived and labored the first 8 years of their married life. Here I was born Dec. 10 1848, brother Erick on Aug. 8th. 1850, Anfin Dec. 12 1852 and Kristi May 15 1855.

My memory does not include many incidents in my life here; but here are some. I was perhaps 6 years old when father had made me a sled.

Together with father and my sled with me we had visited at the owners home which was on high ground quite away up from the fjord or sea. Going home father let me get on the sled to coast down the steep incline towards our home down close to the fjord. Instead of steering towards the house I evidently let go straight down the hill and over the stonewall, built to keep the earth from sliding down into the sea. I went and landed at the waters edge, a fall perhaps 8 feet or more. Father was not slow in coming to pick me up expecting that I might be killed. But I was not hurt. The luck was too that the sea was at ebb tide, at flow tide I would have landed in several feet of water. Also do I remember how Anfin slid on a flat rock slanting down into the sea where it was there very deep, but the kid had grabbed a hold of some seaweed growing on the rock and held on untill mother came to drag him out of his perilous situation.

One day Erick and I climbed upon a rock protruding out from the mountain side 12 ft. high, under which and close by was a Sour apple tree, now loaded with apples.

In order to get the apples down we were throwing stones into the tree, when Erick standing close to the edge lost his balance, and over he went, falling the 12 ft. down on stony ground, but miraculously escaped with only a deep cut across his nose up between the eyes. Home remedies healed the cut in due time, but the scar has remained to be seen during the years.

Another incident I remember might be of interest to some. One day in the early fall of the last year we were in Norway, 1855, Father and Mother had gone up in the mountains to cut grass as before related. Kristi, the baby then 2 or 3 months old had to be along, and I as her caretaker. That was a tiresome job for a boy not yet 7 years old to sit there all day with the baby. She was so good that it seemed hours between times that I was relieved by mother.

After a long time of this quietness, I got very tired and gave her a good pinch which made her squeal good and hard. I was relieved then for a while; but if mother found the cause for baby's crying I don't remember. This is evidence of the inherited depravity of humanity.

#### The Preparation for emigration to America

The winter of 1856 found our parents preparing for the voyage to America. The first 8 years of their married life had been spent in this Fjaerland community as farm manager, and as husman (House renter)- and some of the winters out on the Ocean with fishing expeditions; but the remuneration for it all was very small. And the future financially was not very bright.

America had now begun to be talked about also here as the land of promise. One young man, Arne Boyum, had gone about two years before, together with one or two from Feios where father was born. So during this winter a well to do farmer with a family decided to go. His name was Peder Wilson Rødbotten. After selling his farm he promised to pay our transportation if father and mother decided to go. The kind offer was I am sure gratefully accepted, and as I have heard it from father he paid for us all 120 Dollars. All this without the scratch of a pen, just on fathers oral promise that he would pay it to him as soon as he could

make it. Wonderful confidence men had to one another's honesty in those days. And I know that father fulfilled his promise, though the payments were made in installments covering 5 or 6 years.

Of the actual preparations for the voyage, the baking and preparing enough food for at least 10 weeks sea voyage I have no recollection.

It must have been going to say goodbye to mother's relatives in Leikanger and father's on Berdal in Feios that I remember a boat ride. A heavy storm blew up and I got so scared and cried so that my Aunt Anna gathered me up in her arms and held me fast. The rest is a blank on my mind until we got to Bergen where we had to stay for some days before our ship the Columbus was ready to sail. Here I remember seeing a new ship much larger than ours being rigged up getting ready to sail also to America. This ship Hebe by name, I have learned by later reports, sailed two weeks after we did from Bergen but arrived several days ahead of us at Quebec.

One incident shortly after leaving our home on the Sognefjord for Bergen I have from good authority. A freight schooner was hired to take us and the Rødbotten family and possibly others from our homes to Bergen. The custom was that those leaving must be treated with farewell drams of liquor. As there were many flasks all must be tasted, and some had taken more than they should and among those was the Skipper. Out on the Main Sognefjord a storm blew up towards evening, the Skipper was drunk, and no one on deck to manage the sails, father was asleep, but in the excitement and the cries that the ship was tipping over father awoke, saw what was to be done, took command of the vessel and thereby saved us all from a watery grave in the fjord. Father was a man of action, and had been out with fishing schooners many winters.

The latter part of May 1856 we sailed from Bergen for Quebec. The voyage was uneventful as far as my memory goes. In fair weather Erick and I would be on the deck having learned to balance ourselves as the ship rolled and dipped on the waves. We were never sick, but Aunt Thrina was seasick on the whole voyage and mother a part of the time.

Our ship was a slow sailor but had made many trips across with emigrants. In a Preus Family biography I see that Rev. E. A. Preus and wife just married came across on this ship Columbus in May and June 1851 in 7 weeks to New York. It took us 8 weeks and 2 days to Quebec as I learned from father and mother. After passing doctor's examination and as I have learned no one detained at quarantine the ship took us up the St. Lawrence River to Montreal. From here we were transferred to boats going by way of the Welland canal and up the great lakes to Chicago. I can remember the landing at Chicago, the immense lot of baggage of all sorts piled up on the wharf and the commotion and anxiety of each family finding their belongings. The whole ship load was here now; but their final destination from here was at different points. An interpreter was with us from Montreal, to help set them on the right track from here. \_So we were sent on the Illinois Central, now just finished, to Gallena Ill. and then by river boat to Lansing.

The accommodations for immigrants were very primitive. We were all crowded into a cattle car with our baggage with rough board benches set up along the sides of the car to sit on.

The boatride up the Mississippi to Lansing during one night was even worse, quartered among a lot of very rough dockhands. Those of the company on this last leg of our journey as I remember it were: Father and Mother, us 4 children and two of father's sisters, Thrina and Anna, Mr. and Mrs. Torkel Fosse with many children, and Sjur Tveit and his fiancée. We arrived at Lansing early in the morning after about 3 months strenuous journey since leaving our old home. While I know our people those of the mature age breathed a sigh of relief and

thankfulness we still had a distance of about 30 miles to go to reach the Big Canoe settlement in Winneshiek County Iowa, where father had a distant relative to whom we were going and Sjur Tveit had a brother, and the Fosse family were old acquaintances of these people from Norway who had immigrated to this new country a few years ago. These people not knowing when we would arrive, or possibly not knowing even that we were coming this summer, were not in Lansing to meet us. But this being a town with many Norwegians in business, and this being the market place for people in the Big Canoe settlement they soon found two men from the settlement who promised to bring us to our destination. They were Ole Støen and Jørgen Brunsvold, with an ox team and lumber wagon each.

After a drive of about a day and a half these men brought us to the Fretheim home; and I can remember how good Mrs. Fretheims food tasted after subsisting for 3 months on the food prepared in Norway.

Mrs. Fretheim was a widow with some grown up boys and younger children. Their house was small so we could not stay there very long. It was getting near harvest time so father and mother found work in harvest with one Jørgen Hanson Sande. Not only did he give them work, but took us all into their home. They had 4 or 5 children and with us 4, it made quite a family in a small house. But such was the accommodating spirit of the people then. We got along fine. The grain was cut by cradle and here father learned to use it, and mother helped with the binding. When all the summers work was done we moved to the home of Anders E. Aase who had a larger house and only 2 boys, Elling 16 or 17 and Lars 14 or 15. This was near the only schoolhouse in the settlement. Here I took my first lessons in English during the winter of 1857. Lars Aase I remember was my good guardian when some bad boys would pick on me and make fun of my newcomer clothes. These two boys I have always held in grateful remembrance for their goodness to us, and Lars especially. He enlisted at the outbreak of the Rebellion and was killed in the battle of Bull Run. Father was never idle. During the first winters here in Iowa he found work in the woods splitting rails, or cutting and preparing logs for building.

My two Aunties who came across with us had paid their own way, and after coming here worked out, most of the time the first years as house maids in Decorah. Peder Nilson Rødbotten who had paid our fare, stopped in Wisconsin for a year or two, then came out to near Rushford Minnesota, called Northprairie settlement where father made final settlement with him.

#### To Resume my Story of our first years in America

In the early Spring of 1857 father rented a small piece of ground from Ole Støen, (the man who took us from Lansing.) and his pioneer log house. Here then we had a home all by ourselves. On this I remember we planted corn, potatoes and other garden truck. I remember the corn patch particularly for I had to help hoeing this to keep the weeds down, and I didn't like that job. Father had work during this summer, and I believe also the summer of 1858 on this Støen farm. The winters he spent as aforesaid in splitting rails. From here we had to go during the winter months to school 3 miles to this same school house. This distance we had to go during the winter months to school very often in deep snow, and yet I don't believe there were many days that we missed school. Erick and I had plenty of company with 2 or 3 from the Støen family and several from the Fosse family who now had bought a neighboring farm. During the summer we attended Sunday school conducted by Erick Ellefson Slaeen. This was a devotional service for both young and old. Before a resident pastor came in 1857 and a congregation was

organized Mr. Ellefson did much to hold the people to the Lutheran faith by his Sunday school and devotional services on Sundays.

The Free Methodists had gained quite a following in this community, but they did not succeed so very long. Some time in the late fall of 1858 father had bought a young pair of Oxen, besides we had 2 cows. During this fall father had rented a farm 2 - 3 miles farther north. This farm being up on the hills north of Bear Creek. To this farm we moved during the winter or early spring of 1859. Why this farm was vacated and for rent I do not know, nor do I remember how much cultivated land there was. It was not very many acres I think; but a fairly good log house and stables for our oxen and cows.

This country was as yet very sparsely settled. The very first settlers had been here only since 1850. So there were large areas of vacant land.

On some of this vacant land Erick and I were herding our cows in the early summer down on the other side of Bear Creek. All of a sudden a lot of men came up along the creek gesticulating and talking, with dogs and carrying ropes and I suppose guns. At the sight of them our cows took to their heels and disappeared up the hills through the brush and we towards home, but had to cross the creek, across which was a big log on which to walk. In our haste and excitement Erick fell into the creek which was narrow, but deep. With my help I suppose he got out. These were Indians out from the Mississippi River, hunting and fishing along their old hunting grounds. The first we had ever seen.

I don't remember how or where we found our cows, but I know it was some time before we dared to go down to the creek again with the cows. One good kind neighbor we had down below us on the creek bottom, Torkel Teksle by name who helped us in many ways. He was an early settler and had several horses and many cattle. This family we visited often. On Sundays there was always a houseful of people.

What we harvested on this farm I don't remember, surely some wheat, potatoes and other garden products for the household. Wheat then was always brought to mill in the fall and exchanged for flour enough to last all winter, also the butchering to supply meats for the winter was done in the fall. Of groceries many were not needed. A little coffee and sugar was provided to be on hand but not for every day use. The cows furnished us milk and butter; so no trips to town during the winter was necessary. There was no school here nearer than the one I had previously attended 5 or 6 miles away so father for the winter months of 1859 and 60 engaged room and board for me with Ole Sattre near the school where I stayed and attended school allwinter., We had this winter an excellent teacher and I was greatly helped along in the elementary branches of the English language.

#### MOVING TO HOUSTON CO. MINN.

On this farm where we had now lived this last year or more, father got acquainted with some who had relatives in Black Hamar Township north of Spring Grove. Father had evidently been up there during the fall or winter of 1859 and 60. About twenty five miles from where we lived. Spring Grove which is now a thriving village was then a new settlement of Norwegians on a high ridge of land called Norwegian Ridge. From this Ridge we could see almost all of Black Hammer Township with the mount covering about half a section of land in the center of a stretch of prairie land. This prairie surrounded by heavy timber, and ridges of brush land was a fine sight. Here the pioneer settlers had selected their land so as to include some timber and

some prairie. Here was now already a community of settlers most of whom hailed from a neighboring Bygd - community - from ours in the Old Country. There was yet some government land to be had at 1.25 pr. acre tho most of it was bought by land speculators from eastern states. Father had no money as yet with which to buy land, but a Section of School land adjoining the prairie was offered for rent to settlers at a low rate. So here he picked a 40 acre tract on which to build our first real home in America.

The first settlers who came in 1853 namely the Jens Otterness family, his brother Guttorm, and the Winjum family had built a log house to be in common for them all for the first 2 or 3 years. This was a matter of economy and also a sort of security for the women and children against the Indians while the men were away all day working and building on their own claims. Other settlers came later and one or two additions were built to this house.

When father came there and had decided to rent and settle on the School land this community house was vacated except the main part occupied by the owner of the land on which it was built to wit Jens Otterness. So one of these additions father bought, took the logs down and put them up again as they had been. I don't think there was any flooring. I know the roof was split logs covered with birch bark and sod to keep the bark down. On the hillsides leading down to the valleys were a lot of large birch trees from which the bark was taken for roofing. This bark made as good and watertight roof as shingle, and with the sod covering made it warmer for winter. So when this house was ready early in the spring of 1860 we moved here with all our belongings, consisting of a pair of oxen and an old wagon carrying our few household goods with mother and the younger children, -another girl had now been added to the family- Martha born 1858 while in the Big Canoe Settlement.

Besides the oxen our cattle consisted now of 5 cows and 3 or 4 young stock, not so much of a herd, but considering payments that he had made on our transportation tickets to this country father had succeeded very well.

This land was brush land with openings in between where was growing fine blue joint grass so all over these hills was fine grazing for the cattle. There was evidence that in bunches had been large burr oak trees, burnt off by prairie fires in later years, but their roots remained so that much grubbing had to be done before breaking.

Some breaking was done this spring after moving in for I remember we raised some sod corn, potatoes and beans this first summer.

Then in the last half of June came the haying. Father cut the grass with the scythe. Mother and Erick and I would do the raking. Later when sufficiently cured Father and Mother would do the stacking.

We had now a neighbor family. Uncle Lars Exe who had married fathers sister Anna in the Big Canoe Settlement had now settled on another forty of the school land and built their log house, same as ours. There was miles of vacant land over hills and valleys west and south of us so our cows and young stock would get far away from home towards evening. If we did not hear the cow bell it was for Erick and I to run over the hills to find them. This we thought was fun, but for one thing. We soon found that there was a lot of snakes on these hills and among them the rattlesnakes which would give warning with his rattles when given time, but in running we would come so suddenly on him that we would jump right over him. Being most of the time barefoot, yet we were saved from his bite.

The early settlers from 1853 who had some prairie land had now under cultivation 30 to 50 acres each, so for harvest this year father and Uncle Lars Exe hired out to Guttorm Otterness who had perhaps 30 or 40 acres in wheat and a few acres in oats and barley. All to be cut with the cradle. There were as yet no harvesting machines in this community. I can yet in my mind seem to see the fine wheat field yellow and ripe for the harvest, and these 3 men each with a cradle attacking the grain one after the other keeping perfect time with their cradle strokes, laying the grain in fine swaths, after which would follow boys and girls big enough to handle a rake to rake these swaths into bundles for others to bind..I was also along here to do some raking. If there were no one to do the binding as the case here, the men would quit cradling the middle of the afternoon and go to binding and shocking and work as long as you could see a bundle. There was no 8 hour day rule then. A days work was from sunrise to sunset or later.

No complaint was made about the length of the days work. On the contrary both father and uncle Lars were so glad to get this work which would assure them at least of enough wheat to have ground into flour sufficient for the coming fall and winter. Although the work day was long and work was hard, there was always a generous supply of food. Besides the 3 regular meals a day there was always brought out to the workers a lunch both forenoon and afternoon. When the harvest was over a stable of logs was built for our cattle. Timber of all kinds was plenty near by and could be had without much cost. When the grain stacking and haying was all done, and usually late in the fall the threshing would be done by one of those old time primitive machines, owned by one Jens Fretheim from the Big Canoe Settlement. This fall I was sent down to this settlement where we had lived, to one Ole Tvedt to do his plowing. This was during the month of September and not yet 12 years old I got along fine with his oxen and the plow, and remember that I was praised for my good work. This was my first job of work away from home. What my pay was I don't remember, father attended to that. From this time on for 3 or 4 years I was out working from early spring in seeding time driving oxen dragging in the seeded grain, and in the fall plowing or as band cutter with the threshing machine. This was the most interesting.

My pay as a rule was 25 cents per day in seeding, fall plowing and as band cutter with the threshing machine. During haying and harvesting, I would be at home. With smaller size scythes Erick and I would do quite a lot of mowing, and in 1863 I believe it was, that Erick and I cradled all our grain some 30 or more acres and father did the binding, possibly Anfin did some raking. This was a very dry summer so the wheat was thin, but the heads well filled, and the grain plump, so now we had wheat to sell and to keep for flour the most important food article. A grist mill was now built in a little inland town about 6 or 7 miles away where we got out wheat ground.

Our herd of cattle was increasing and I remember how thankful our parents were for the Lords blessings of the bountiful crops, the good land they had found and the good home which they could call their own, although yet very primitive.

#### GOING TO MARKET WITH OUR FIRST LOAD OF WHEAT

In the late fall of 1862, father had this one load of wheat to sell and was going to La Crosse with it where there was certain things needed for the home to be had. Loaded up in the evening we were to start very early in the morning. I was to go with him. We had no clock as yet. The stars at night was his guide as to time. This morning there were no stars to be seen so it must have been shortly after midnight that we left home. The weather was fairly good and our oxen

faithful and willing so about dusk in the evening we reached La Crescent over 35 miles. Now the Mississippi river yet to cross to get to La Crosse. So had to stop here over night. Hotels were accommodating. We had food with us prepared at home without much expense. In the morning father decided to sell his wheat there, having found out, I guess, that prices were not much better in La Crosse and that he could get what he wanted here. So I missed seeing the city of La Crosse and riding on the ferry across the river as I had hoped. The price of wheat then was only 50¢ pr bushel so there would not be much money to squander, this being in the early or second year of the Civil War. What I remember best on this trip is the day on our way home. A very severe cold wind with snow flurries from the northwest came down upon us, and being scantily clothed I had an awful time to keep from freezing stiff. I remember father gave me his mittens over my own saved my hands from freezing. This just to show some of the hardships of the early years.

### The election of 1860

This Blackhammer Township as already related was settled principally by Norwegians, most of whom had lived in this country but a few years, and in their daily intercourse naturally would use their native language.

Father had as yet learned very little of English, so that when he went to a town to do trading or other business, he would take me along as interpreter; for I had been at school a few months of each year of the 4 years since our arrival, and thought I was quite proficient in the language of the land.

Well here is what I wanted to relate in regard to the election of 1860. I was 12 years old lacking 1 month.

The rent for the school land we had settled on was due about this time, so this Tuesday morning we started out with our oxen hitched to the old lumber wagon, for Caledonia the county seat.

Father not knowing or perhaps had forgotten about it being election day, I remember we had heard much discussion about this man Abe Lincoln. Arriving at Caledonia, 12 or 13 miles from home, we found the County Treasurer in his office- a kind and loveable gentleman of past middle age, Sam Aikens by name and by birth American.

I informed him of our errand about the rent etc. That being disposed of he turned to father, and in good Norwegian language, said come inside here- (a little private office) and we will talk Norsk- Of course father was agreeably surprised to hear his language spoken by an American- and this is the gist of what he said to father after he had learned that he was a legal voter.- This is election day. An important issue is at stake for our country.

The southern states are preparing to perpetuate the slave system. The northerners or those opposed to slavery have formed a political party called Republican and have nominated as our candidate for president Abraham Lincoln of Illinois - here he gave a character sketch of him.-

As a legal voter you must not fail to go to your polling place, and from what I have told you about Lincoln I hope you will vote for him in spite of all opposition you may hear.

As this was yet a very sparsely settled county 3 or 4 Townships were joined in one election precinct, and our polling place was in Spring Grove Township, so that in going there to vote, and then home would make a drive of 20 to 25 miles from Caledonia.

But father did not for a moment hesitate.



We had all heard a good deal about the slavery in the south and it was the one thing in our country very much abhorred by our people, and now when there was chance to vote for such a man as Sam Aikens had described we lost no time in hitching the oxen to the old wagon, and off to Spring Grove we went. In order to get there in time the oxen were forced to take the best time that there was in them.

Arriving there while voting was going on, we heard much loud talking and arguments in both languages, and some of these were not complimentary to Lincoln. He was called ignorant, a common farm laborer, - railsplitter, steamboat deckhand etc. but father being enthusiastic for the liberty of all the people even from the old country, that he now believed. Lincoln stood for, he cast his first important vote in America for him, a vote he never regretted.

The foregoing is written on Lincolns birthday Feb. 12th, 1929. Although 60 years and 3 months have passed since that day, no incident in my life has been more indelibly impressed on my mind and memory that this trip I made with father to vote for Abe Lincoln.

Before closing this chapter I will relate what Mr. Aikens told us about how he had learned the Norse language. He showed us a Bible or perhaps just the New Testament printed in both languages; each page having two columns - one column in English and the opposite in Norwegian, and getting some help with pronunciation from his Norse neighbors he read and spoke the Norse book language very well. In later years I knew many American and Irish boys and girls who learned to speak the Norse language and thought it an accomplishment to be proud of.

#### Forebodings of War with the South

In this year 1860 there had come a large number of immigrants from Norway and Scotland also some from states east of us, to settle among us. One American family, Cooper by name, consisting of husband and wife and 3 sons of military age and 2 daughters had come all the way from N. Y. state. Mr. Cooper had bought some speculators land, unseen, which joined the school land we had settled on.

After the election of Lincoln all sorts of rumors of war with the southern slaveholders were in the air and talked about.

The old line Democrats would say, if it came to war this man Lincoln who the Republican party has forced upon us will be the cause of it. There was much agitation and political unrest during the winter. In the fall and early winter there were signs in the heavens as well predicting bloodshed.

The Northern lights were very frequent, and these lights would flare up clear to the zenith and beyond and turn almost bloodred.

Our older people took this for a sure sign of bloodshed causing much discussion. But people went on with their daily tasks, improving their homes, cutting trees, hewing logs, preparatory for more and better buildings both for man and beasts. On the streams where a dam could be built, little flour mills and sawmills were erected. And even a distillery was built this fall and winter in a neighboring township, where this new made whiskey - called Rot-gut could be had for 20 cents per gallon or less, or barrels of it for a few loads of wood. This distillery became a curse to many a family whose members patronized this industry, while the flour and sawmills were blessings for the struggling pioneers.

### The War of the Rebellion 1861

The rumors and the apprehension of war finally became a reality as the news of the attack on fort Sumter worked its way towards our outskirts of civilization.

A call to arms was issued by president Lincoln for volunteers for 3 months service.

I do not remember that any one in our community enlisted under this first call as this quota of 75000 men was quickly filled from the older states. But in the fall of 1861 when the second call came, many of our young men flocked to the recruiting stations and enlisted. Among these I remember Hans Olai Olson, the three Cooper boys, Bill, Henry and Jack, Ole Eik, John and George Thom, most of them serving in Minnesota regiments from 1st to 10th.

Later, during 1863 and 4, drafts were ordered and many of our older men with families had to go to fill up depleted ranks. The military age in those days was from 18 to 45 years.

Father was on the military list, but he together with 2 or 3 others of our township were the only ones not drafted. One of these drafted men, Hans Severson Hovdalie, a new neighbor of ours, I can remember so well, who had to leave his family of wife and 6 or 7 children, financially poor, but aided by those remaining at home they got along with their little farm. He was sent clear down to Atlanta into Gen. Shermans Army, and marched with him on that memorable march "to the sea." From him or this Shermans Army we heard nothing for months, which made it so hard for the folks at home. But at the end of the war he came home unharmed. In fact out of the 12 or 15 that served during the war from our community only 2 fell on the battlefield, Hans Olai Olson and Frank Brown.

### The Indian Scare 1862

It was not only the war in the South, but the Indians in the west that continually stirred the people with fear.

We had heard of the massacres by the Indians of settlers at New Ulm, Norway Lake, and in Jackson Co. As far as I know our community thought themselves safe from the Indians, as they were now so far to the west of us. But all of a sudden one morning, the first week in September, a messenger came I think on horseback crying that the Indians were killing people on the prairies west of us and burning farm homes only 10 to 15 miles away and that we must flee for our lives to Caledonia our county seat.

Father and Uncle Lars Exe had gone that morning west on the creek bottom to mow grass for hay with their scythes, the only mowing machine in those days. Erick and I of course started on a run to notify them, 1 to 2 miles away. Fathers orders were to get the oxen home, and in a wonderful short time they were home and yoked and hitched to the wagon. Mother and the smaller children together with Aunt Anna Exe and two children loaded into the wagon, - the rest of us walked of course - leaving everything that we owned to the depredations of the Indians. I did not at that time, though in my 14th. year, realize what that meant. My only regret was for a lot of nice ripe plums that we had just gathered and had to leave. No one it seemed doubted the report. It was one of those calm, hazy or smoky days caused, we learned later, by forest fires. But off we trudged as fast as we could make the oxen go. We living the farthest west out on the South Fork creek ridge, were I suppose the last to be notified, so when we came along neighbors to the east of us had gone, all the places along the road were deserted.

For some reason or other we decided to go by way of Sheldon, a little town with a store, a

blacksmith shop, a mill and a saloon. This was not the shortest way to Caledonia but sure enough here we caught up with most of our neighbors who were being detained there by a recruiting officer telling the people to go back home, - that there were no Indians within 150 miles of us -that these stories were probably started by horse thieves etc., and some were actually on the point of turning back when an Irish family drove up perched on a homemade sled drawn by oxen. The woman on the sled, Mrs. Farley, listening for a moment to this officer - she opened upon him, and in good Irish brogue and in language hardly fit to repeat told this officer what she thought of him, "telling us to go back to be scalped by the Indians" -for she said, "Out on the prairies west of us didn't we see just as plain as could be the smoke from the burning homes set by these scalpeens. Drive on to Caledonia. We may have to get across the Mississippi to be saved." And her command to drive on was obeyed, in spite of the recruiting officer. How many he detained from going I don't remember. Perhaps those few living in the little town but we and all our neighbors drove on. Before we reached Caledonia a couple of men living in the southern part of our Twp. on horseback caught up with us, informing us that they had been 15 or 20 miles west on the Fillmore Co. prairies- that there were no Indians to be seen,- that the homes there were also deserted. (People there had gone to Decorah) and that they believed this was just a false alarm. But we drove on to Caledonia, as these men also had their families somewhere on the road. How the Farley family on their sled got to "Calodony" I don't know, we did not see anything more of them on that trip.

There was a lot of people in Caledonia that day and we stayed on listening to discussions whether this was just a false scare or not untill about sunset when wiser counsel prevailed and the people decided to turn towards home again.

We went with an acquaintance and his family who lived 5 or 6 miles towards our home and stopped with them over night. Coming home the next day we found everything about the premises in the same order that we had left it - the cows patiently waiting to be milked and a pig or two squealing for food.

The years of the Civil War of 1861 to 1865 were stirring times even for us at home.

Recruiting Officers holding meetings in our schoolhouse calling for volunteers. Soldiers coming home on furlough, many of them wounded; men with families being drafted, and young boys enlisting as volunteers to fill up the ranks of thinned out regiments kept up the excitement at home.

In 1863 an order came from Washington for each Township to organize all the old men and boys still at home into military companies and set certain days for military drill.

Our Township of Black Hammer immediately complied with the order, called a meeting and elected company officers. (Those I can remember are) Captain: Tosten Johnson (Lomen); Lieutenant: William Thom.

(Captain Johnson in order to escape the draft later enlisted as a volunteer.)

(William Thom had two brothers in the service and was not drafted.)

A fife and Snare-drum and Bass-drum were bought and a certain day of each week was set aside for military drill during the summers.

As our officers were not skilled in the codes of military drill, a Soldier who had been wounded and was now home on furlough was engaged to drill the men and boys in the arts of war.

Being now in my 15th year I was an enthusiast for Soldiering and surely did not miss these drills when I was at home. The martial music made by the fife and drums and marching behind the flag was the boys' inspiration.

Will add here that from the fall of 1860 when I was 12 years old I was hired out to neighboring farmers, in the fall to do plowing, and part time with the threshing machine as band cutter, in the spring to do dragging during seeding time. The summers would be hoeing corn and help in haying and harvesting. There were no idle days in my boyhood. About 4 months of winter up to 1864 I was at home and attending school.

#### In 1864 Store Clerk

Brownsville, Houston Co. on the Mississippi river was our market place for our main farm products wheat and pork, about 30 miles from our home, there being no railroad as yet west of the Mississippi. A storekeeper there, P. Boylan, by name wanted a clerk who could talk Norwegian to help him draw some of the trade from the Norwegian settlements in the western part of this county and farther west. Somebody had recommended me. So in August 1864 I went there, tho not yet 16 years old and inexperienced in everything but farm work, I was accepted on trial. He was to pay for my board and room at the Mundt Hotel and besides that pay me whatever he thought my services was worth. What that pay was I don't remember; but I liked the place and the work and stayed with him untill June 1865 nearly one year without going home. 30 miles was a long way off in those days of ox team navigation. I suppose I got homesick and remember that I started for home on foot.

Some memories of incidents lived thru in those days might be of interest to the younger generation. The war was still raging; in the south. Recruiting officers were calling for volunteers for various towns to save the older men with families from the draft. I remember being offered \$400 bounty to enlist for Chatfield Minn. But my employer Mr. Boylan said: wait until I get drafted and you can take my place. In those days men drafted were allowed to hire substitutes. Being only 16 I would have had to get fathers consent, or as many boys did away from home, given my age as 18. Good that I was kept from doing that. Red Wing, Winona and Brownsville were the great wheat markets for the new settlers to the west. The territory of Brownsville took in all of Houston Co. Nearly all of Fillmore Co. and also part of Mower Co. Prices had been steadily going up during the war so that now at Christmas 1864 wheat was \$2.25 pr bu. Butchered Hogs went up to 16¢ pr lb. No hogs were sold alive as we had no packing houses as yet. Everything else was in proportion very high; but money was plenty, crops good, and people prospered. I said everything at this time was high in price. Shall qualify that by saying that liquor was cheap, very cheap. a 5 gallon keg of whiskey was \$1.00. The reason: There was no license or tax to pay. A distillery was as free as a Sawmill. No licensed saloons. Nearly all storekeepers had barrels of whiskey in their cellars, for sale by the gallon, same as Syrup or for customers to go and take a drink whenever they felt the urge. The consequence was much drunkenness and yet without a single policeman or any city ordinance whatever a man or woman could go up or down the crowded street unmolested day or night. Robberies of any kind or holdups or murders were unheard of. Happy days compared with 1934! As long as the river navigation was open in the fall the wheat taken in here was shipped on boats to railroad points farther south or some to New Orleans to be transferred to Ocean vessels for European markets. When the river was frozen solid enough the wheat was taken by teamsters to La Crosse (10 miles away) the nearest railroad point. During this winter of 1865 as many as 50 teamsters were employed making 1 trip a day.

Brownsville was a very busy place. In the fall and winter the street was crowded with teams bringing wheat or butchered hogs waiting a chance to unload. There was only one street between the bluff and the river on which the 2 or 3 warehouses were built on the river bank, and the few stores backed up against the bluff.

The only hotel in town was built and operated by \_\_\_\_ Mundt a German by birth, but by adoption and marriage a Dane. In the large front room was also the bar-room where liquor was sold, and it was much of the time evenings a noisy place. But no quarreling was allowed. Mundt was his own policeman. I was not much in this room unless there were farmers in from our neighborhood. Mrs. Mundt was a refined Danish Lady and all the while I boarded with them I was treated as one of her family.

The assassination of President Lincoln was reported to us at Brownsville on the morning of Apr. 15th 1865. I can remember the consternation and sorrow that this report produced among all classes young and old. Evidence was now plain that the war could not go on much longer. Most of the southern strongholds and fortifications had been taken by the northern armies. Only Richmond was left, And now this great tragedy.

After coming home from Brownsville, it was to take up farm work again, part time at home and part time for neighbors. Father had now while I was away bought 80 acres of prairie land a few miles south of the school section where we had lived, had built a primitive house in which they now lived and strawstables for the stock.

He had also bought a pair of young horses which I took much delight in, and which I helped to train for work and to ride. Attended our country school again this winter of 1865-66, 4 months. We were now quite a large family in this primitive house on the prairie, tho close neighbors to one of the earliest settlers here, Ole Wendelbo Olson.

Besides father and mother and myself, the oldest of the offspring 17 years, was Erick next oldest, but I think he was in Iowa this year working for Jørgen Sande (better known as Strilakongen) Then there was Anfin, Christie, Martha, Ole, Herman and Johan. Christoffer was not yet born.

This land we did not occupy very long. With so many boys growing up father was desirous of getting more land. So sometime during the winter of 1866 he got a chance to sell this 80. And then went west to Amherst Township, Fillmore Co. and bought an improved farm of 160 acres, on which father and I did the spring seeding before the former owners moved away. Shortly after seeding the whole family together with stock and farm utensils moved out to this new location. Here was quite a good size two story log house giving us very much improved living quarters.

#### My first experience as teacher

While our family was moving to this new location in Fillmore Co. I commenced to teach the summer term of school at Black Hammer in May 1866.

Not having attended any higher school than the one in which I was to teach, the scholastic requirements could not have been very great. One of the members of the school board went with me to the County Superintendent and I obtained a 3d grade certificate good for 1 year.

After this first term of school I worked on the farm at home through harvest and threshing.

This summer of 1866 the war now being over, a lot of immigrants came from Norway. Among

those who came to us was mothers cousin Anders Henjum with family and his brother Christoffer a single man of 20 years, and with them our Aunt (deaf and dumb) Synneva in all 6 people. With our family then 10 in number, made it quite an interesting gathering under one roof, and we were not lonesome.

Anders Henjum soon found a small piece of land that he rented on which in a sidehill he built a temporary dwelling, a dugout which was so common then. In 1870 they moved to Kandiyohi Co. where he took a homestead near Norway Lake. His brother Christoffer had learned the blacksmith trade in Bergen, Norway, but worked, for farmers most of the time, and made his home with us untill he moved with us to Dak. Ter. in 1873. Aunt Synneva was with us as member of the family untill her death.

This same year Anfin O. Berdahl came from the old Berdahl home in Norway. Stopped first with some relatives in Big Canoe Settlement in Iowa after which he made his home with Uncle and Aunt Lars and Anna Ekse on Black Hammor untill he went west in 1871.

Also this year came Herman Wangsness and wife Kristi, who was mothers Aunt, with their youngest son Christoffer then 13 years old, and their son in law Thor Hermanson and family, and another son in law David \_\_\_\_\_ and wife and child. These all came first to Herman Wangsness' brother Ellond Wangsness near Calmar, Iowa.

Later in the summer or fall after Anders Henjum and family had moved to their own home Herman Wangsness the wife and son Chris and their son in law David \_\_\_\_\_ wife Johanna and child Ludvig came to us. In order to make room for this addition to our family an addition was built to our house of logs. In this addition they lived with us about 2 years, when they moved back to Iowa untill 1873 when the Herman Wangsness family and the Thor Hermanson family moved with us to Dakota.

The winter term of 1866-67 I taught the same school at Black Hammer, also the summer term 1867 May and June.

Attended a private highschool at Chatfield, Minn. the fall term of 1867 and winter term of 1868. The summer of 1868 and winter of 1869 was teaching again the Black Hammer school.

Between terms of school I was doing farm work part time at home and part time for others.

Some time during the summer of 1869 I saw an advertisement of Augustana College, then called, I believe. Augustana Academy and Theological Seminary was being moved from Paxton, Ill. to Marshall Wis. Rev. A. Wenaas lately from Norway being elected by the Augurtaila Sunod as the President. The school to be opened by Oct. 1st. I immediately took a notion to go to this school. Why I don't know. The only other Norwegian Lutheran church school at that time was Luther College, Decorah, Ia., not so far away. And though we were members of a Norwegian Synod Congregation, I never did approve of the stand our church leaders took on the slavery question and other issues so much discussed in those days.

Not having much money saved up I remember that I borrowed \$100 from a friend of father at Rushford, Minn., father signing the note, and off I went on train to La Crosse, the first ride I ever had on a train since coming from Norway 7½ years old. From La Crosse on steamboat down the river to McGregor Ia. from there by train to Madison and thence to Marshall. Including stops overnights at La Crosse, McGregor and Madison it took me nearly 4 days to reach Marshall. But here I was over a week after school had begun, and not a soul did I know. But a man by the name of Thompson looking for students to board and room soon spied me as

a prospective student, took me in to his home showed me the room I was to have without more ado, as though I had previously bargained for it. After these preliminaries he told me his price for board and room. The academy had no boarding club nor dormitory so those attending the academy roomed and boarded at private residences. The theological students I think had a dormitory and boarding club. Being reticent and by nature very bashful I did not mingle much with those higher up.

After a good nights rest at Thompsons, my new home, I started in the morning for the schoolhouse. Not knowing any rules of procedure I was sort of perplexed, but thought that I must ask to see the President Rev. Wenaas, the only name I had heard of being connected with the school. As I entered the schoolroom I was greeted by a young chap about 16 or 17, Gerhard Gjertson- The Gjertson family had moved with the school from Paxton- and after finding that I wanted to go to school took me in to the Principal of the academy Prof. J. J. Anderson where I registered and was greeted and treated so kindly that I immediately felt at home and gradually got over my bashfulness.

The Christmas vacation I spent on Spring Prairie with some of my parents acquaintances from Norway also on Koshkenong with the parents of one of my schoolmates. It was a good school for me as I there got in touch with some very earnest Christian young men who later became pastors and leaders in our church, like G. Hoyme a classmate, N. C. Brun one of the teachers then and theological student, also some other theological students as Lars Lund, H. Z. Hvid, Helsem, N. E. Boe and others. When spring came I began longing for home and the farm life, so before school closed for the summer vacation I started for home together with Chris. Henjum who had come to Koshkonong to visit a sister. We took the train by way of McGregor to Calmar Ia. Here we visited and were entertained by the Wangsness people, where brother Erick came to take us home by team.

After coming home and spending a little time there I again went to Black Hammer to teach the summer school there 2 months, May and June. Did farm work during the summer at home. In the fall hired out to Mr. Ward at Whalen as clerk in his store. In Jan. 1871 went to work for Dyer at Whalen as clerk untill some time in March.

By previous arrangement with Chris Henjum who was now in Goodhue Co. I went there and together with him started for Norway Lake where his brother Anders Henjum had located the year before. After visiting with this Henjum family and some other of their relatives settled there, Chris. Henjum and I took a notion to see more of this new country to the north and west. So off we started on foot north through the very sparsely settled counties of Pope, Douglas, Grant, Ottertail and into Becker Co. where they were then grading for the Northern Pacific Ry., east along the grade where now is Lake Park, Audibon, and Detroit Lakes, thence south for home.

In our travels we would follow trails from lake to lake. On or near these lakes were the only settlers then. Between some of these lakes we might go a whole day without seeing a habitation of any kind.

Through this region, later becoming known and famous as the Park Region, we traveled without seeing any land that we liked for a location. The reason I suppose was that I then had no notion of moving west to a new country.

From our trip northwest came home and engaged to teach 2 months summer school on North

Prairie a few miles north of Lanesboro. Closing school about July 15th 1871, I went right into the harvest field with Marcus Ulvestad, one of the big farmers on North Prairie. Five of us to bind our stations after a seven foot McCormick reaper driven by 4 lively horses was the hardest work that I had ever done; not having done any physical labor for a year, it took me some time to toughen my muscles to stand this strain, but after a day or so exchanging my binding with the driver and part time with the shocker, I pulled through this harvest also in good shape. Did stacking with Ivar Olson Suphedl and his sons Ole and Lars later well known at Lake Preston S. D. by the name of Olston. Laborers wages had been going up since the civil war and was this year \$3.00 pr day in the harvest and nearly the same in haying and stacking.

The crop of small grain was immense here this year. Farther south in Wisconsin and Iowa the chinch bug had begun to do some damage to grain, but had not reached here yet. The price of grain was still high and the communities around here were prospering.

After stacking went home. Erick and I did the threshing around home this fall with a machine we had owned a couple of years.

Some time before Christmas 1871 I went to work for D. C. Dyer at Houston, Minn. as clerk in his store untill in May 1872, when I together with father, Erick, Lasse Bothun and Lars Brandvold started for Sioux Falls, D. T. to look for homestead land. Arriving at Sioux Falls the latter part of May we hired a surveyor Cyrus Walts to show us around. The first day we tramped and drove over the territory just east of town, and south into Lincoln Co. but were not satisfied. So next day we started north and east untill we struck the Slip Up creek on the town line between what is now Edison and Sverdrup Tps. north of which our guide said all the land was vacant.

Here then on the Slip Up creek we each of us picked our claims, and the next day which I believe was the 1st. day of June we started for the land office, then at Vermillion, to make our filings. We were the first to file on land in what is now Edison Twp. except possibly Ivar and Ellef E. Ellefson in the eastern part of the Twp., a short time before. They had lived on the Missouri bottom near Vermillion during the winter. With the two horse teams we came out with, Erick and I broke about 5 acres on each of these claims, camping in the covered wagons, the 3 older men doing the cooking and made a few visits to our nearest neighbors 3 miles west of us.

Altogether we spent about 4 weeks out here. Besides breaking we also started to build a sodhouse, or was it a dugout-, on Mr. Bothuns claim, as he intended to move out here for good in the fall with his family. Coming home the early part of July it was haying and harvesting at home, and threshing in the fall. Then after election in Nov. started out again to make further improvements on our claims as required by law. About this trip See article in Samband No. 60, 1913, also the same in Minnehaha Co. Pioner Historie.

After this trip, some time in December, I again went to Dyer at Houston as clerk, where I was employed untill 2 or 3 weeks before starting on our trip to settle for good on our claims in Dakota Ter. I remember that I did not get home untill some time after Erick's wedding which occurred on April 2nd 1873.

Father had already started west with some men going to locate not so far from our claims in order to build some sort of habitation for the family untill we came. So it devolved upon Erick and I to pilot the caravan as we were the only ones new who had been over the road.



About May 15th. we got started.

See Article in the Garretson News for more information about this trip. Those in this company from Amherst Fillmore Co. were the Berdahl family, Loftesness family, the Mrs. Power family, Olaus Jenson family, and Albert Brandvold and his mother. From Ia. came H. Wangsness & Thor Hermanson.

After arriving at our destination about the middle of June, the first week was spent in finding claims and locating all those who had not been out here before. Those were Mrs. Power, her sons Joe and Sam, John Loftesness, Olaus Jenson, Albert Brandvold, Herman Wangsness and Thor Hermanson, also John Power and his father who came with the Mrs. Power family.

When all of the above named had selected their land and made their filings at the land office, now in Sioux Falls, breaking was started as the first improvement on each claim. Next came haying to provide winter fodder for the cattle. During all this time they all camped out on the open prairie in their covered wagons the same as while on the road, except fathers family. He had a combination dug-out and sodhouse ready when we arrived.

Father had bought a mower and a horse rake so he did the mowing and raking for most of this company the first year, while many of us would club together and put the hay in stacks.

Then came the building of the sodhouses by the same method.

In Sioux Falls there were now two general stores where we could buy anything we actually needed. But heavy goods such as hardware and lumber were high priced because of transporation charges by team from nearest RR stations Worthing or Le Mars 65 to 90 miles away.

After I had a temporary sod house built on my claim and all the rest of our company had gotten into houses of their own I returned to Houston, Min. to again take up my work with Dyer in the store during the winter. Another reason was that I had a girl back there who had promised to share fortunes with me in the future, that was waiting for my return. So after the holiday trade was over I got the Christmas week off which I spent at her home.

The third Christmas day, Dec. 27th 1873 we were married at the church after the regular Christmas service by the Rev. S. S. Rekve (Roque). A few days were spent at her home and visiting relatives after which we both went to work for the Dyer family untill about the 1st of Apr, 1874 when we packed up our belongings which consisted of one trunk for each of us, and took the train for Worthington where brother Erick met us with team to take us to our future home.

My 5 acre piece of breaking that I had done the year before was now being sown to wheat by father and the boys at home as had no team as yet. Perhaps an acre or so was left to set out some trees in. So about the first thing after our little seeding was to plant trees. Cottonwood seedlings and cuttings was brought by a couple of neighbors from the Missouri sandbars near Vermillion which father, Erick and I bought and set out. Some on each of our claims. The first year or two we worked together on all the summers work. After seeding and treeplanting we built a new sod house for me only a few rods from fathers as he had built close to my line. This was good for my wife was afraid to be alone and it took her a long time to be consoled and satisfied with these primitive conditions.

We men would be out every day, sometimes far away helping others in exchange work. This

year many more homesteaders came. I spent days, many of them, helping to locate these new comers, and would not come home sometimes untill late at night. Then it was good for her to spend such evenings with her mother in law and her family or be near enough so she could see the light in their window. Right here will I say that the younger generation can never realize how much their mothers suffered of loneliness out here on the open prairies the first year or two with "nothing to hide behind," as Beret in Rølvaags Giants in the Earth put it. Nor did we men at the time realize it, busy as we were with our work.

In July 1874 a republican territorial convention was held in Elk Point to nominate a candidate for Congress to which I was one of the delegates. Going home from this convention on Howards 4 horse stage coach we had our first experience with a swarm of grasshoppers. We had stopped for dinner at Canton, and shortly after starting from there we met a great swarm dropping down on us just like a snow or hailstorm. As there was a little wind againat us on which the hoppers were sailing to earth, the driver had his hands full to control and guide his 4 horses against the swarm. This was the first, or the vanguard of the hoppers- Colorado locusts we called them- that pestered us more or less the next 4 years.

Our school district No. 13 was organized this year. A sod schoolhouse was built, and the winter of 1874 and 75 we had our first district school. This writer was the teacher several winters the first years. Before this school district was organized and the school house built a private school was held in my claim hut for 2 months January and February 1874 by brother Erick for the neighborhood youngsters.

This being the first school in what is now Edison Twp. And eastern Sverdrup Twp. we had some of these first winters up to 50 pupils, many of them young men and women 15 to 21 years old. It was an interesting school with the old fashioned spelling contests and debates.

In the fall of 1874 I was by a county convention nominated and at the general election elected to the office of County Assessor and Sheriff ex officio. In January 1875 I qualified for these combined offices. There was not much to do for the sheriff in those days so a deputy was appointed in Sioux Falls to attend to what might come up between sessions of court.

With the help of two deputies, brother Erick and Sever Wilkenson, I asessed all the settlers of the county in 1875 and 76. The assessment was made in April and May those years.

I had now a span of young horses bought from my sister Christie and a light spring wagon in which I scooted over the country, forded the Sioux river at several places during spring flood, when the water was so high that the horses had to swim. My pay was \$3.00 per day; but the county had no money but issued warrants which I had to sell for 60¢ on the dollar, giving me \$1.80 a day for about 50 days each year assessing. The sheriffs pay was \$4.00 pr day attending court, but not many days each year, and incidentals not very many. So in July of my second year in office I sent in my resignation, mainly for the reason that I had promised my wife to make a trip back to her old home in Houston Co. for the summer and that I did not wish to be placed on the ticket again this year for another term because assessing took me away from home too much during the seeding and planting of trees and other work needed to build a home.

So in July 1876 shortly after the 4th we rigged up the spring wagon with a good cover, and as the hoppers were again coming down upon us here and there in swarms we started for Houston Co. with our baby Johny then about 8 months old.

We had a very pleasant trip, good weather and good roads, and in 6 or 7 days driving we reached my wife's folks, and found them all glad to see us.

Having made agreement with father and the boys to harvest my 30 acres of wheat and oats if the hoppers left any I was in no hurry to come back. After visiting around for a week or so I went to work with my team harvesting and haying with brother-in-law John Skeim. The crop there was fairly good. Chinch bugs had caused some damage in spots; but there were no hoppers.

About the middle of September we covered our wagon again and started for home. Brother in law Ole came with us and stayed with us until the following spring.

Each of these years 1874 to 77 much breaking was done and trees set out. It was this spring of 1877 that I finished planting my 5 acre tract of trees which under our law then exempted this 40 with buildings thereon from taxation for 10 years. This year I "proved up" on my Homestead, so my tax exemption began in 1880 when it was first assessed. On last years breaking especially the hoppers hatched out by the millions; but we reduced their numbers considerably by hauling over the infected fields a large sheet iron pan we had had made by a tinner in Sioux Falls, in which we put some kerosene which killed them instantly. With this contrivance we saved some patches of grain from the ravages of the young hoppers, but later on as they had grown wings we had swarms of them alight on us again and my grain was nearly all taken, while many in our vicinity escaped entirely. This was a good year for grain, especially wheat. The finest wheat I ever saw was raised this year where the hoppers missed it.

After harvesting what little the hoppers left and putting up hay enough for winter use I went to Luverne and hired out to Mr. Glass as store clerk. The railroad was now running to this place and wheat already beginning to come in so I went right to work without going home.

After I had found a house to live in father brought the family over, which now consisted of my wife and Johny 2 years old and Martha about 3 months old.

Father and the boys at home had promised to take care of my stock, the two horses 1 cow, 2 3-year old steers and a calf or two.

At first my pay was \$25.00 pr month and board, later \$40.00 boarding myself.

During this fall the railroad was built to Beaver Creek 8 miles further west where Mr. Glass put up a building to be a branch store. This store I was to take charge of. So on the 1st of January 1878 my family and I moved to Beaver Creek where we got room on the second story of the store building free, besides my \$40.00 pr month. Being the western terminus of the railroad and our store the only general mercantile store in town our trade was very good during the winter. People coming here from the scattered settlements of Minnehaha, Lake and Moody counties besides the immediate vicinity in Rock County which was nearly all settled up at that time.

Father and the boys did my seeding this spring. As the weather was good for the growing crops and the hoppers seemed to have diminished so as not to do us much damage I concluded to quit my job and move back to my homestead. Some time in June we made the move. Then it was that I filed on the 80 acre tract in Sverdrup Twp. as a preemption.

Here I will tell something about the winter of 1877 and 78 which was different from any of the winters we had lived through before. The week before Christmas 1877 it rained I think every day; there had been no frost in the ground all fall. The only one street in Luverne on which the

stores were was so water soaked that it was almost impassable with teams. On this account we had a very poor Christmas trade.

On the 1st day of January 1878 the day we moved to Beaver Creek was quite cold so the ground froze a little; but in a few days it warmed up again, the ground thawed out and there was no more frost in the ground that winter. Men could be seen working in the fields anytime during the winter, plowing or dragging. In March a little snow, but no frost. In April a heavy windstorm I think on the 4th. On the Sioux bottom it blew down the Nidaros church, the first Lutheran church built in the county. There was very much rain during the spring and summer months with much warm and foggy weather causing a very heavy growth of grain and grass, so that in June we expected an unusual yield of grain. But in July a heavy rust settled on our grain fields. This was the first time we had seen rust on grain, so we waited for it to get ripe until it all fell down crinkled so we had to use the mower on most of it. The grain we got out of it was like screenings.

The years 1879 and 80 were good years with abundant crops, with much rain. 1880 has gone down in history as the year of the great October snowstorm. October 14th started in with a light rain in the morning which turned to snow in the afternoon and evening and possibly far into the night. When daylight woke us up in the morning the 15th. there was a roaring blizzard outside, with heavy wind from the northwest sending the snow in clouds so thick that it would take ones breath away, and impossible to see a rod ahead.

My horses and cows I had in the stable but some young stock were outside. After several unsuccessful attempts to venture away from the house in the forenoon I finally struck out in the afternoon to look for the young stock outside, and found them huddled together in the shelter of fathers stables with some of theirs almost covered up with snow. All this day the storm raged and all night, but gradually subsided the next day, but was intensely cold for many days. Our potatoes most of them were yet in the ground, but some milder weather set in so that the snow melted, except the big drifts which covered some of our potato patch stayed on the ground all winter. When these drifts melted in the spring we found our potatoes all right as the ground did not freeze under the snow drifts.

The heaviest snow fall of 1881 began in February, and from then on until about the middle of April there were snowstorms almost every week, so that by the 1st of April the snow was about 4 feet deep on the level where it was not blown away into ravines or piled up in our little groves and around our houses. The wind blowing sometimes from the northwest and again other days from the east or south did completely fill some of the smaller ravines. A road was made to Sioux Falls past our place at or near the military road from Pipestone, by oxen and men tramping the snow hard under foot until it would carry a team at some places as much as 10 ft or more above the bottom of a ravine. Some time after the 15th. of April mild weather set in and all of this snow suddenly turned to water and the great flood was upon us. It took a long time for the water to pass down ravines and the river bottom because of the big drifts hindering and stopping the water. There was but little frost in the ground so that on our plowed ground the water soaked in. But because of the wet condition of the soil we did no seeding until nearly the middle of May.

In January 1881 we organized Township government in our county by electing township officers as provided by legislative act of 1879. Also discussion of dividing the Territory was beginning about this time, and asking for a Constitutional Convention for the south half of the

Territory was talked of by our politicians because of much dissatisfaction with our Federal appointed Territorial officers, but nothing came of it for some time.

Having served as sheriff and county assessor in 1875 & 6 and now elected Township clerk of our Township it was natural for me to keep posted on our Territorial affairs, and to take part in conventions and gatherings tending to further any move towards more self government.

In 1881 I think it was that our Territorial Capital was moved by act of the legislature from Yankton to Bismark, and the legislative session of this year was held there. This made another good argument for getting away from the north half of our Territory. Some of our members from the south part were accused of playing traitors to our interest in helping to take our capital away from Yankton, as we from the south were in the majority if they had all stuck together. "Logrolling" methods were given as the excuse.

The legislature of 1883 at Bismark passed an act for a constitutional convention for the Territory south of the 46th. parallel to be held at Sioux Falls in Sept. of this year, but this was vetoed by our Governor Ordway. In spite of this a mass convention was held in Huron and there decided to call an election to be held in all the counties in August to elect delegates to a constitutional convention.

Not many of our people took part in this election, but delegates were elected and the convention held which is now a history of the first attempt at statehood.

In the spring of 1884 we organized the Farmers Mutual Fire and Lightning Insurance Association of Minnehaha County. At a mass meeting a constitution and by-laws were adopted. Reorganized May 1885 under Legislative Act of Mar. 13th 1885 authorizing the formation of county mutual insurance companies. John Thompson was first president and A. J. Berdahl secretary.

Again in 1885 our legislature passed an act calling for a Constitutional Convention for the south half of the Territory, the delegates to be elected at a special election June 30th. This act was signed by the governor and became a law.

Without any solicitation on my part I was elected as one of the delegates to this convention perhaps because I had taken some part in discussions for dividing the Territory.

This convention I can say did faithful work. The Constitution here adopted was as we have it now except for a few minor changes made necessary by the Enabling Act of Congress 4 years later. Our pay in the Convention of 1885 was \$2.50 pr day and actual traveling expenses.

Our appeal for admission under this Constitution of 1885 was disregarded untill Feb. 22, 1889, when Congress passed an Enabling Act giving the following Territories power to call Constitutional Conventions to wit: North Dak. South Dak. Montana and Washington.

At the election for delegates to this convention I was again elected and served. For further memorandum of this Convention of 1889 see the Convention Journal and the Conv. Debates

1882- Father, always being solicitous for the welfare of others as well as his own family, had learned of the death of his sister Anna's husband Lars Exe; that she was now left alone with 3 young girls (the oldest Ingeborg was married). So he induced me to go to Big Canoe Iowa their temporary home, and bring them to his home here, which I did after harvest. I brought Aunt Anna Exe and 2 of the youngest girls, Marie and. Olina; the older one Britha had a good place to work and decided to stay there. Father was taken sick during the fall, and lingered along

untill February 1883 when he died, only 60 years and 4 months old.

In the summer of 1885 during a week of exceedingly hot weather in harvest brother Johan died of sunstroke while binding on a harvester for his brother in law Lars Otterness about 20 years old.

The move to Baltic in the fall of 1887 was a foolish move; but was done to make life easier for the wife and mother who was not well physically. Continued a general merchandise store together with John O. Langness.

In the spring of 1893 moved to Garretson with my share of the merchandise and joined with brother Anfin. There disposed of what little I had left of store goods and moved back to the farm in the spring of 1896 to start farming anew.

While still living at Baltic in 1892 I was elected to the office of County Commissioner for district No. 2 for a term of 3 years, serving from Jan. 1st 1893 to Jan. 1st 1896. Because of the small salary limited to \$125 pr year I declined to stand for reelection. For the time spent in distributing seed grain to farmers in need of seed furnished by the county and making out their notes for the same we received a little extra compensation.

This was after the dry year of 1894 when no farmer in our county raised enough for seed. But some had enough left over from previous years, so they did not have to buy.

1894 was also the year when the commissioners by petition and popular clamor wore forced to hire a rainmaker which caused us many extra meetings without pay. For further report of this rainmaking see Bailey's History of Minnehaha County.

The winter of 1895 was an open winter without any snow untill March and not very cold so that cattle and horses picked a good living on the grass which had dried and cured during the warm and dry weather of the summer and fall before. Some prairie was as yet not broken, but in its native condition. Nearly all school lands were yet unsold and open for cattle ranches.

The spring from March on brought us a lot of moisture seemingly to make up for the drought of the year before. The sunnier weather was excellent and we raised the biggest crop, pr acre, that we ever had raised before and have ever raised since. The grain gamblers were able to "bear" the price down very low, but with the abundance raised, all who had given notes for seed grain to the county paid up on time with one exception reported to Co. Treasurer John Mundt.

1896 was an exciting political year. Wm. Jennings Bryan the democratic nominee for President was fighting for the remonitisation of silver at the rate of 16 to 1. The Peoples Party nicknamed Populists, its main issue was curbing the Industrial Monopolies, and the G. O. P. fighting both, with McKinley as the standard bearer, won out to the bitter disappointment of a lot of Bryan men and Populists out here. And here and now after nearly 40 years of political experience since that day I will say that Bryans defeat that year was a sad calamity for the common people of our nation,- the agricultural population especially.

In the county a majority of the Populist candidates won out. John O. Langness was elected County Treasurer and he wanted me to serve as clerk. So on Jan. 1st 1897 I left the farm in charge of James who was now nearly 16 years and served in the office for two years with Langness. In 1898 C. L. Norton was elected and I continued in the office with him part time of 1899 and 1900, helping on the farm in seeding and harvesting when not so much help was needed in the office.

In 1900 I had been elected a member of the School Board for Augustana College at Canton. This Board had bought 8 acres of ground for a new site for the school, the old building not being modern, and otherwise inadequate for the increasing number of students.

The School Board selected the following as a Building Committee, and was organized as follows:

#### 1901 Building Committee

John Isakeon President

A. J. Berdahl Secretary and Treasurer

G. Skartvedt, Rev. H. M. Solem,

Prof. J. S. Nordgaard, Prof. A. G. Tuve,

J. J. Craft.

This committee had made a contract with a house mover to move the old building onto the new site during the school vacation of 1901. This made it necessary for me as Treasurer to be there in person, and as mother was taking some treatments from Miss Enebo an Osteopathy Doctor of Canton, it was decided that we move to Canton. The farm was rented to John Kringen and the move made in the spring of 1901. For 2 years I labored there together with above named Committee while the old building was moved and the new building was being built and was enclosed late in the fall of 1902. All the work done was by day labor, hired by this committee (except the contract for moving old building) which made for me much book keeping - keeping the time of all laborers, and paying off at end of each week, besides collecting donations, and keeping account thereof, buying material of all sorts and paying for at stipulated times.- Part of the time I worked with my team preparing the ground for the campus, hauling the lighter materials from the depot and taking the stone masons tools to the blacksmith for sharpening and back again, moving stone and cement to where needed by the masons etc. All the records, books and list of donations pertaining to the school buildings should be found in a box at Aug. College.

For the two years work I received 800 dollars. One years work I donated to the school.

The other members of the committee received no pay. They also spent much time in soliciting donations especially John Isakson and Gudmund Skartvedt, in numerous meetings planning the work, engaging workers and otherwise superintending the building operation. All without pay.

Early in the spring of 1903 we moved back to the farm in time for seeding. Poorer financially but richer in experience, and in the knowledge that we had been helping to build a better school.

From now on to 1915 farming was carried on with varied success, most of the time alone, as the boys and some of the girls being away at school or teaching. Two of the girls would be at home to care for their mother who was getting more and more infirm as the years went on until she died on May 12th. 1915. From 1905 to 1915 both years inclusive I was assessor of Edison Township. Having obtained a position as clerk in the Co. Auditors office I took the assessors books with me and began work in the office July 1st 1915.

Andrew J. Berdahl

*This manuscript was written over a period of time as evidenced by the "contemporary" mention of the year 1929 and 1934 in separate sections of the text. Sometime later (possibly 1944?) Andrew's record was typed to mimeograph by his son, James O. Berdahl. In 2011, I scanned and digitized a copy of a copy of JOB's*

*mimeographed manuscript which was located in the Minnesota Historical Society archives. The copy was reasonably good. I did not correct spelling errors but tried to follow exactly the text as JAO recorded it. None-the-less, there are likely a few inadvertent digitizing, editing, and proofing errors that I introduced in the process. I have not yet seen Andrew's original text. Please send corrections to any transcription mistakes noted to: [dx@dxhansen.com](mailto:dx@dxhansen.com).*

*Dixie Hansen, Saint Paul, MN.*