

Early Marsh Grove Township History

"This section of the country with its well-developed farms, well built homes, telephone communications, daily RFD mail service, radios, good roads, speedy automobiles and improved machinery, was previous to 1882 uninhabited by white man." So begins an article in the Newfolden Clarion, September 9, 1932. The article was written by Inez L. Anderson, granddaughter of one of the first settler of the area. The article entitled 'Early History of West Valley and Marsh Grove Townships' was published in two issues of the Clarion.

In 1882, Anders Anderson, along with several others settled the area now known as Marsh Grove township in Marshall County located in northwestern Minnesota. He settled on a homestead along the banks of the Middle River. Several other Norwegians arrived the same year. Listed below are some of those early settlers and the year they arrived.

1882: Halvor P. Elseth, Ole P. Dyrud, Anton Haft, Gulick Wedne, Charley Westman, Andrew Westman, Halvor Amundson, Andrew Larson, Lars Amundson Jutelrud, Elias Haarstad, Olaf L. Brekkstrand, Salve C. Anderson, John Anderson, Gustaf Scott, C. M. Hawthorn, Jacob Vinje, Fred Knitter, Fred Sevinke, August Sevike, John F. Johnson, Tollef Boardson, Wesley Gaar, John Collins, and Peter Julin.

1883: E. O. Hjelle, Iver Ophus, Ole Bjornrud, Ole Sathre, Anton Larson, Christ Engelsrud, Herman Engelsrud, Peter Vinje, Mads O. Vinjhe, Carl Ranenkilde, Peter Jens Webjorston, Lars Johnson, Ole Erickson, Edward Haarstad, Martin Strand and Jacob Elstad.

1884: Ole Nyflot, Torkel Subdahl, Jorgen Garbal, Ole H. Lind, Jens Green, Peder Green, Evan Sagnes, John Knutson, Anders Bring and Iver Grimstad.

1885: Peder J. Bakke, Andrew J. Bakke, Thomas Kolstad, C. P. Haugen and August Gast.

When these early settlers came to Marsh Grove they had to clear the land of trees, build some type of shelter and plant crops. Most of the early shelters were built of logs with sod roofs. They were usually very small one-room dwellings. Next to be built was a shed of some variety for the livestock. The settlers later built frame homes. Once the land was cleared of trees and undergrowth, the sod was turned with hand plows drawn by horses or oxen. Seeding was either by hand or by using a 'broadcast seeder'. Harvesting was done usually by hand. Charlie Westman, however, brought with him a harvester which cut the grain but did not tie bundles. Two men had to stand on the machine and tie the bundles by hand. Westman did harvesting for his neighbors with this machine. Gulick Wedne was the first farmer to have a self-binding harvesting machine. Threshing was done with an early version of the threshing machine. The machine did not have a blower or feeder attachment, so it took many people to operate the machine. Bundles were thrown into the machine on one end and the straw removed by hand on the other end. The grain was collected in boxes on the ground. Power was supplied either by horses walking in a circle or later by a stationary steam engine. The engine was on wheels and had to be pulled from farm to farm.

Wheat was the prime grain raised by the early settlers. Argyle was the nearest place to sell the grain. The trip there took a full day. There were no roads at the time so the people drove cross-country. The Middle River had no bridges at that time so they had to travel along the southern side of the river making the trip longer. The first bridge built over the Middle River was in 1894 and cost \$200.00 including material, labor and grading.

The trip to Argyle had other benefits also because the farmers could buy provisions there and pick up their mail. A post office was established in 1884 in West Valley Township and mail was delivered there once a week. Next a post office was established in Newfolden. D. B. Bakke was the mail carrier and traveled by horse and cart. The first post office in Marsh Grove was not established until 1897 at Fovang which was located about four miles west of the present village of Newfolden. The post office was discontinued in 1913 when rural free delivery service from Newfolden started.

Marsh Grove Township was organized March 10, 1885 with the following officers elected.

Chairman - Elias Haarstad

Supervisors - H. C. Grim and Peter Green

Clerk - C. M. Hawthorne

One of the first tasks undertaken was to build roads. Male residents between the ages of 21 and 50 was required to work a number of days without pay building roads. Real estate taxes were also collected to pay for supplies and equipment.

The first church congregation, Bethania, was organized in March 1884 by Rev. C. Saustad who also served as the first pastor. The log church was built in 1885 on section 5 of Marsh Grove Township. In 1904 it was replaced with a frame church.

A second church Bethesda was organized on March 16, 1904 and built on section 7 of Marsh Grove Township. Norwegian was the language of the church for several years. In 1964 the members voted to discontinue the services and dissolve. The cemetery and the church bell are all that remain.

Public school training took place in 1886. A. Garborg was the first teacher and the classes were held at the homes of Ole Sathre and I. P. Ophus alternating months. The first schoolhouse was built in 1888. A second school was built in 1892 across the road from the Bethesda church. Both schools consolidated with the Newfolden school district in 1950.

A Temperance Society was organized on June 11, 1900 and continued to be very active until recent years. Their goal was to have each county decide if they would have saloons or not.

The first white child born in Marsh Grove was Louise Green, Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Green. She later married Ralf Tandberg. The Tandberg and Green families still operate farms in the area.

One of the early settlers, Ole Sathre, brought back two buffalo from South Dakota and kept them on his farm. They create quite a sight when they wandered about his farm.