HAY COUNTRY
HISTORY

A Story of the Pioneers
of the Gayville and Meckling, South Dakota area
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The cover picture was made from a photograph taken in the 1870's of an early Dakota Southern locomotive on the tracks at Meckling. This photo, courtesy of Martin Piersoll, Vermillion.
THIS IS HAY COUNTRY - '72
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FOREWORD

It is good to look back occasionally and see how we got here. We hope that through these pages, we have given an accurate view of the time and the place which forms the background for our stay here. The material which has gone into this book is as authentic, accurate and complete as time and space permitted. We were unable to use all the pictures but we chose the ones that we thought illustrated the story best. We wish to thank the many people who provided pictures and information. Also, thanks to those who helped with typing, the loan of maps and atlases and the loan of a typewriter when our own broke down.

Mrs. Carl Miller, historian

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all who contributed to the growth and development of this community. May it continue to be a good place to live with all the beauty and challenges provided by nature plus the comforts and conveniences developed by man. May we have the intelligence to enjoy one without abusing the other.

We invite everyone to help commemorate, on August 25-27 of this year, the lives of those pioneers who with faith, tolerance, resourcefulness and courage, developed this area. Let us keep their pioneer spirit alive!

Centennial Co-chairmen
Harold Jensen
Ben Van Osdel
Settling the Bottomlands

Struck-By-The-Ree Valley

Some people called it Struck by the Ree Valley — this land lying along the Missouri River and bounded by the James and Vermillion Rivers. It could not have had a more suitable name. For this beautiful valley was for many years the winter home of the Dakotah Sioux — of Struck-by-the-Ree and his people. And Chief Struck-by-the-Ree was a great man with many admirable traits, among them being intelligence, honor and integrity.

According to tribal histories, the Dakotah Sioux had lived north of the Mississippi, about the Mile Lakes of northern Minnesota, where their ancestors had been driven from Wisconsin by the Chippewas. When this area became crowded and it became necessary to find other hunting grounds, some groups broke off from the parent band. They drifted south and west until they were divided into seven groups, among them being the Tetons, the Santee and the Dakotahs, all tribes of the Sioux. The time of the first migrations is not known, but about 1760, the Dakotahs, the last to migrate, moved south to drive the Omahas from the Sioux River to a new home south of the Missouri, and to claim the lower James, Vermillion and Sioux River valleys.

Since the Tetons had migrated earlier to the upper Sioux and James valleys, they claimed the lower reaches of these valleys also. The arrival of their relatives, the Dakotahs, started a thirty year war between the tribes. But by 1800, the Dakotah Sioux were firmly in possession. In the meantime, they had exchanged their diet of wild rice, berries and fish for the meat of the buffalo, and their earthen homes for the buffalo skin tipis.

The home life of the Dakotahs revolved around the Tipi. Some were large, others were quite small, depending on the number of horses the family owned. It took seven horses to carry a large tepee with its 25 to 27 long poles, and several ponies for the bags of provisions and rolled up beds. Some family groups had a pony to pull a travois (a framework of poles and skins) on which the very young or the very old could ride. While on the hunt, they traveled until they found a grassy spot near water. Then while the men attended the horses and hunted game, the women set up the tipis and prepared the meal, and the children played games. In the evenings the children and older people watched while the young men and women played competitive games. When night fell, everyone was ready to rest. If a storm threatened, the edges of the tipis were staked down, the flaps were closed and everyone huddled inside. This was a time for the elderly sage to pass on legends and lessons on the ways of his people.

This land of the Dakotahs was, as it is today, a land of savage extremes — of bitter cold and intense heat. Winter days might change from mildness to an icy blast in a matter of minutes; and in summer, the earth might get dry and parched, or the rains come often and hard with flashing thunderstorms or swirls of hailstones. But in the spring there would be green grass and spring flowers; and in the fall, Indian summer and foliage in shades of yellow, orange and brown. With the variance of the weather this area had some constant legacies, too; the wind, the magnificent sunsets and great vistas as far as the eye could see. In late fall when summer’s hunting ended, the village left the prairie and sought some timbered river bend for a winter camp. The Dakotahs usually set up their winter camp along the Missouri, near the James.

This is where they were August 28, 1804, when Lewis and Clark made their famous expedition up the Missouri and made camp between the old and the present mouth of the James. That night, it is said, an Indian child, son of a head chief, was born in the Indian village near their camp. Captain Clark visited the village and asked that the child be brought to him. A ceremony was arranged in which the baby was wrapped in an American flag and appropriate speeches were made. Captain Clark pronounced him an American citizen and prophesied that the child would become a great leader of his people. That child was Struck-by-the-Ree. The name Struck-by-the-Ree was said to be that of his grandfather, who was wounded as a young chief on the field of battle by a Re or Arickara Indian. He survived the ordeal and was given the name of Pa-la-ne-a-pa-pe, which in the Dakota language means Struck-by-the-Ree. Struck-by-the-Ree evolved to Strike-the-Ree among the white traders and settlers and later, to “Old Strike”.

Although the white man had made his appearance in Dakota soon after the Dakotahs had established their rights here, life for the Dakotahs remained much the same for another fifty years, as Strike grew to manhood and became a chief in his own right. They did begin to exchange their surplus skins to the traders for calico, sugar and flour. And they acquired guns which helped to hasten the destruction of their game, and thus, their livelihood. The Indian ponies made it possible for the Dakotahs to roam over the vast prairies for game and skins; but on water, the bullboat made of buffalo skins was an unwieldy substitute for the graceful birch bark canoe. The travels of the early white explorers and fur traders were chiefly on the nation’s waterways.

Fireboat-That-Walks-On-The-Water

The expedition of Lewis and Clark opened up a new country to exploration, and the first to follow their path up the Missouri past the bottomlands were
First log cabin on the bottom, built in 1859 by Syvert H. Myron

Old log building used as the Lincoln post office in 1874 — Hans S. Myron, postmaster

Man in picture — Louis Ahrendt
the fur traders led by Manuel Lisa and his party in 1819. Soon several fur trading posts were established in the valley between the James and the Vermillion Rivers. The Columbia Fur Company built a post called Oakwood which was near the present boundary between Yankton and Clay Counties. Another trading house operated by Theophile Brughiere was near the mouth of the James. The sites of these posts have been cut away by the current of the Missouri.

The first traders came up the river in keelboats, but in 1832, Pierre Chouteau of the American Fur Company piloted a steamboat, the Yellowstone, up the Missouri as far as the present site of Pierre. It was a 130 foot side wheeler, specially built with a flat bottom to draw very little water. Artist George Catlin was aboard and had an excellent chance to observe the Indians and to make some drawings of them as they gathered along the banks of the river to see this awesome sight, the fireboat that-walks-on-the-water.

In 1833, another steamboat, the Assiniboine, accompanied the Yellowstone on its second trip. On this boat were Maximilian, the German nobleman and naturalist, and Karl Bodmer, a skilled artist whom he chose to accompany him to illustrate his written observations of Indian life. In 1843, John James Audubon, a renowned wild life artist, made a visit to this area. Other passengers of the early steamboats were traders, missionaries and military men. Later they were loaded with Indian delegations, gold seekers and homesteaders.

The tricky Missouri was filled with shifting sandbars so that boats were not able to run at night. Even in the daytime, there was scarcely an instant when the pilot dared lift his head from the wheel. If the boat did run onto a sandbar, a set of spars were set in the river bottom and equipped with a tackle block and a heavy rope passed over it from the gunwale to the capstan. As the capstan was turned and the paddlewheel revolved, the boat was lifted and pushed forward. This was called “walking on her stilts” or “grasshoppering”.

Another problem for the steamboatmen on the upper Missouri was to provide fuel to power the boat. A steamboat used about twenty-five to thirty cords of wood every 24 hours. The first steamboatmen had to cut their own wood or snag driftwood during the night to provide fuel for the next day. Hostile Indians made woodcutting hazardous day or night. Later, as hostilities ceased and steamboat traffic increased, professional woodcutters or “woodhawks” lived along the river and kept supplies of wood available during the boating season.

In the spring of 1857, the Interior Department of the United States Government sent A.S.H. White to visit the Yankton Indians and ask them to send a delegation to Washington to negotiate a treaty ceding their lands in southern Dakota to the United States government. His mission was unsuccessful, but that fall Captain J.B.S. Todd of Fort Randall secured the services of a halfbreed, Charles Picotte (said to be a grandson of Struck-by-the- Ree) who succeeded in persuading the chiefs to go to Washington, and who accompanied them as an interpreter. The delegation, Struck-by-the-Ree included, traveled down the Missouri by steamboat. On April 19, 1858, a treaty was completed by which all the land between the Sioux and the Missouri as far north as Lake Kameska was ceded to the government except 400,000 acres which was to be a reservation for the Dakotas. The treaty allowed the 2,530 Indians until July 10, 1859 to leave the ceded land.

**Pre-emption and the Homesteaders**

To encourage the settlement of public lands, Congress had passed the pre-emption law in 1841. Under this law, any citizen of the United States or a single woman of lawful age or a person of foreign birth who had declared his intention to become a citizen was permitted to settle upon and claim 160 acres of public land as a pre-emption right, under which he was entitled to own the land after six months of settlement and payment of $1.25 per acre. In case the land was not yet surveyed, a prospective settler could squat upon a desirable piece and hold it until the surveyors had completed their work and then file on it at the government office. Land companies were formed in states bordering on Dakota and fraudulent claims filed as early as 1856. But until July 10, 1859, any claims by white settlers were illegal, and any settlers entering the area were ordered out by the Indians.

On May 12th, 1857, W.P. Lyman, who had been connected with the army at Fort Randall, floated down the Missouri from Fort Randall on a ferryboat which he had built himself, until he reached the mouth of the James. He proceeded up the James several miles and established a ferry crossing there, where he lived with his Indian wife and family until they moved to the Black Hills in 1876; so he might be considered the first white settler in Yankton County. But he was not a homesteader.

In July 1859, the John Stanages and their two children, John and Mary, with two yoke of oxen, two new wagons, a few cows and a breaking plow reached the east bank of the James River about a mile below the Lyman crossing. Mr. Stanage had been a soldier in the army at Pierre, but when his enlistment was up, he went to Sioux City and outfitted himself to homestead. He was probably the first to cultivate soil in Yankton County, and his wife was the first white woman to live in the area. Most of their neighbors were Yankton Indians, a number of whom he hired to help put up some buildings. The treaty was now in force but Indians continued to roam over their old hunting grounds for some time, particularly during the autumn and winter of 1859. That fall John put up a rope ferry across the James near the present John Dominick home. His place also became a mail drop on the wagon route to Fort Randall, making it the first post office in the area. By October, there were ten log cabins and a dugout along the James, housing 27 white men, 4 white women and 5 children.

On August 8, 1859, a number of Norwegian immigrants came across the Missouri River from North Bend and St. Helena, Nebraska, to lay claim to the
rich bottomlands between the Vermillion and James Rivers near the Missouri. Many of them had come to America in the 1840’s and settled in Wisconsin, then had moved on to wait on the Nebraska side of the river for the opening of the territory for settlement. Others had come more recently to join their relatives in pioneering. The heart of the first Norwegian settlement was in Norway Township in Clay County. Ole Olson, Sr. and Halvor Swenson with their families squatted on some land about 1½ miles southwest of the present town of Meckling. With them came Hans Myron, then a young boy. On August 17th his father, Syvert H. Myron arrived with his family and settled about three miles south of the Olson’s near the river. That same fall there were quite a number of new arrivals: Ole Gjetle, Lars Forbiaa, Christian Jordahl, Lars Lunde and Amund Hanson. Halvor Swenson built a sort of hotel on the wagon road 8 miles west of the Vermillion River. It was called the 8 mile house and provided a place to water and feed the horses and oxen which were used to pull the freight wagons, and later, the stages.

The Norwegian settlers were chiefly young, hardy and vigorous. On the first Sabbath in the new land, they gathered for prayer. It became a custom for them to meet at one of the settlers cabins on the Lord’s Day and hold religious services by reading the Scripture, singing hymns and listening to short addresses. Most of the homes were rudely built of logs with roofs of hay or earth, but they were warm and comfortable. It is well that they were, for the weather the remainder of 1859 and the early months of 1860 was largely unpleasant—severe storms, first rain, and then snow, made life difficult. During one snowstorm in January 1860, George D. Fiske, the local manager for Frost, Todd and Company, was frozen to death, his being the first death to occur among the settlers. Ole (Olson) Gjetle, Jr. was born March 2, 1860. The first white child born among the settlers on the bottom.

In the spring of 1860, another small colony of Norwegians, headed by Ole Sampson, accompanied by his mother and his twelve year old brother, Louis, with Ole Bottolfson, John Aalseth, Aslak Iverson, Halvor Brynelson, Halvor Anderson, Peter Anderson and Colber Olson moved across the Missouri from North Bend, Nebraska and nearly all of them took land in the vicinity of the Lakes, near the present site of Gayville in Yankton County. Johan Aalseth, Christian Burud and Mathais Minne settled near the James River; and Ole Bottolfson and Aslak Iverson joined the settlement in Norway Township.

By the middle of the summer of 1860, there were 17 Norwegian farmers at the Lakes who had planted 200 acres of wheat, barley, corn and potatoes. In October, Henry Bradley from Fort Randall and J.B. Greenway from the area of Sioux Falls settled with their families on the James River near the Stanages. United States surveyors Ball and Darling surveyed two tiers of townships along the Missouri River that fall, from the Big Sioux to the Yankton Agency. The settlers could now file claims for the land they occupied.

The Bottom in the Sixties

Two very important things happened to Dakotans in 1861. In March they became citizens of Dakota Territory and a month later, Civil War broke out. As a result of the war, the regular army was called back east so the settlers were obliged to organize their own militia to guard their settlements. Familiar names on the roster of the militia were: John Stanage, Abe Van Osdel and his sons, William, 15 years old and Samuel, 13 years, J. Zachariah Hagglin, Ole Bottolfson, C. Ellefson, Aslak Iverson, Ole Halvorson, Ole Larson, Matthias Larson, James and Colburn Oleson, Andrew, Christian and Ole Olsen. They were mustered in at Fort Randall on May 20 to receive their training, returning to the community later to protect it from hostile Indians. In March, a post-office was established at the John Stanage residence, to serve the settlers of the bottom. Pastor Jacobson of the Augustana Synod of the Lutheran Church spent some time in the area holding services in the homes of the settlers and performing ministerial duties, the first Lutheran service in Dakota.

One of the many steamship sinkings occurred in August when the steamer Morrow was snagged and sank near the Clay-Yankton County line, and the home guard was ordered to protect the boat and cargo until it could be salvaged. In the fall of 1861, the settlers were threatened by prairie fires. That winter was another severe one with terrible storms and drifting snow in great amounts, continuing into March, 1862, while the first territorial legislature was in session. The last of March, as the snow melted, ice chunks formed a gorge in the Missouri in the bend below the mouth of the James River backing the water up the James and overflowing the bottomlands. The settlers hastily sought refuge for their household goods and livestock on high land. A vast lake was formed ten miles wide and thirty miles long, with islands where Gayville and Meckling now stand. The flood waters stayed three weeks. Indians said it was the highest rise in nineteen years.

The harvest of 1862 was bountiful and the settlers were busily engaged in harvesting it when, late in August, the story of the awful massacre of the white settlers on the Minnesota River reached the community and threw the settlers into a panic. The Norwegian settlers at the Lakes and at Haggins Bend, gathered at Ole Sampson’s in the timber near the Missouri and kept guard around their encampment for nine days. Their company numbered eighteen men and boys large enough to handle a gun, and a number of women and children. Two men went back to the Lakes and found that some Indians had just left Peter Stephenson’s house after killing, roasting and eating a pig. They had done no other damage there, but they had left a warning at Indiri Sampson’s cabin in the form of arrows shot into the log walls. The Norwegians, tiring of the close quarters at the Bend and not daring to return to their cabins, de-
decided to cross the Missouri to St. Helena, Nebraska. They swam their horses and cattle, 191 head in all, across the river and followed with their families in boats. They crowded into the boats so that the boats were overloaded and one boat nearly sank as they reached the Nebraska shore.

Meanwhile, on the morning of September 6th, a courier reached the military encampment west of the James with a report that a band of Indians had fired on the settlers at the ferry landing. Sergeant English took a squad of eight men in pursuit of the Indians until they reached the tall grass surrounding the deserted cabins of the Norwegian settlers at the Lakes. In the skirmish which followed, they killed one Indian but lost track of the others in the tall grass. As they returned to camp they gathered up the settlers near the James and escorted them to Yankton to help build and man a stockade for mutual protection. One soldier named Bell was dispatched to Vermillion to secure assistance from the militia there. Instead of strictly obeying orders, he rode through the settlements and told them that the whole Yankton tribe with Mad Bull at the head had cleaned out the upper settlements and were headed their way. This was entirely untrue (Bell's reasons for circulating this wild tale have never been known) but Strike and Mad Bull were doing all they could to keep the Dakotas from getting involved. The settlers were panic stricken and in an hour after Bell had come with his false alarm there was in progress one of the most complete stampedes ever known. Teams were hastily hitched, a few possessions gathered up, and the family, or in some cases, two or three families tumbled in and were on their way to Sioux City. The exodus began in the afternoon and all night long the road leading out of the territory was alive with a living stream of humanity intent on self preservation. The livestock was turned out and left to fend for itself. After two weeks many of the settlers returned to their homes in the territory, but every cabin on the frontier was a small fortress. Some, especially those who had just arrived that summer, sold their improvements and left.

The next spring, the settlers who had returned planted their crops. Dr. Abram Van Osdel and his wife Anna homesteaded a farm east of the James and their daughter Kate was born that spring, one of the first white children born in the area. On May 5th, 1863, J. A. Jacobson and Thomas W. Thompson, who lived near Vermillion, were at Greenway's ferry on the James River. The men were returning from delivering a load of government freight to Fort Randall and were asleep in their wagon when a band of hostile attacked the camp with arrows and bullets. Jacobson was killed instantly and Thompson badly wounded. An arrow had passed through his heavy coat collar and lodged next to his backbone. The coat collar probably saved his life. Greenway opened fire on the Indians and a nearby encampment of militia started in pursuit but lost the trail. This tragedy led to immediate action on the part of the cavalry to patrol the frontier and protect the settlers. In 1863, there was not a trace of rain for 51 days and the Missouri River got so low that it was being forded and navigation was impossible. That was the summer the grasshoppers first came and along with the drought, destroyed the crops.

In the midst of the terrors and discouragements of 1863, a Professor James S. Foster visited Dakota in the interests of a large number of his neighbors at Syracuse, New York who were looking for a western location. And in spite of the troubles there, he recommended the Missouri Valley. Landseekers were advised to come in May or June and select their land and file on it. They should bring supplies for a year and plan to live in their covered wagon for a few days while they broke a few acres to plant a garden and some sod corn. Then they should build a cabin, dig a well and fence the crops. Before winter, they were advised to put up some hay, build a stable, dig a cellar and get the house ready for winter. So the Foster Colony made plans to come and about the fifth of April, 1864, members of the Foster colony boarded a special train at Syracuse and headed for Marshalltown, Iowa, where the sixty families were outfitted with teams and wagons to complete the journey. Some of the party stopped and settled on Brule Creek, others settled in Clay County, but most of them continued on to Yankton to live in temporary housing which had been provided. Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Taylor settled in Meckling Township and laid out the town of Lincoln. A post-office was established there in 1865.

Just after the New York colony had gotten settled and the fields were showing promise of a moderate harvest, the first bad grasshopper raid was experienced by the settlers. The insects came down at mid-day while a bright warm sun was shining, and devoured every green thing including the leaves on the trees and the grass on the prairie. They chewed up the family wash on the line and the tents which some new arrivals were using for temporary homes. The insects remained all night and departed the next morning as abruptly as they had come. Several of the newcomers were so discouraged at the frightful damage, that they yoked up their oxen and left the territory to return to Iowa. Immigration received a great setback. But it is amazing that with all the discouragements of floods, drought, grasshoppers and Indian scares that anyone remained at all.

The yield of grain in the harvest of 1865 was excellent, but the discouragements of the two previous years had prevented the farmers from putting out large fields. The members of the militia were mustered out in 1865 and some of them settled on homesteads in the area. William and Samuel Van Osdel joined their father and stepmother and homesteaded east of the James. Dr. Van Osdel was elected a member of the Council and S. C. Fargo, of the House, when the fifth session of the territorial legislature convened at the capitol building on December 14, 1865. The annual message of the governor opened with an appropriate expression of the nation's grief over the tragic fate of Abraham Lincoln.

The year 1866 was another flood year, with an ice gorge at Big Bend holding back the waters of the Missouri so that they spilled over the lowlands to a
depth of two to six feet. During this overflow, the Government engineer, in charge of the big Sioux and Fort Randall wagon road, discovered that the bottom lands were higher nearer the river and made some important and economical changes in the location of the road.

New arrivals in 1866 included the Jorgen Brugets, who lived in a dugout near the James before they settled permanently near Plum Creek. Other new arrivals were Leander Lane and the Milton Mores. The summer of 1866 brought more drought and grasshoppers. It was discouraging to the homesteaders but Territorial Governor Newton Edmunds urged the settlers to stay on and diversify their crops and he set an example by getting a flock of sheep for his farm.

The sixth session of the legislature met on December 3, 1866. One of the measures that they passed provided for striking the word “white” from the election laws, and it passed both houses without a dissenting vote and was signed by the governor. The superintendent of schools reported 5 school districts in Clay County with 200 students and 2 school districts in Yankton County with three teachers and 198 students. Amund Hanson, Hans Gunderson and Dr. Abram Van Osdel attended the session as elected representatives.

In the spring of 1867, Abram Van Osdel, Jr. and his sister Mary and family, the Clark Wests, came from Minnesota to settle near the other Van Osdel farms. Christian Olson came with his family from Wisconsin and homesteaded section 28 of Violin Township. Crops were good in 1867.

In 1868, the S. C. Fargoes who had come to Yankton with the Foster colony from New York state took a claim near the old stage road between Vermillion and Yankton just inside the Clay County line. Their son James was born on the farm that same year. Many Indians stopped to enjoy “Johnny Cake,” and sorghum molasses. Sometimes they rolled up in their blankets and slept on the cabin floor while the family slept in the loft. The Indians teased Mr. Fargo by asking to trade papooses. The harvest of 1868 was bountiful and there was a marked increase in immigration and a hopeful spirit pervaded the settlements. The Indian trade readily absorbed any surplus of products which the settlers might have as almost every home acquired buffalo robes made by the Indians because they were soft and warm.

Thomas Inch came from County Derry in Ireland and secured 160 acres of government land on section 9 in Gayville Township and he was followed by brothers Joseph, William and Major, and sisters Katherine and Sarah. Evan Segard settled on section 4 and his parents just east of him. Another party of Norwegians came from Wisconsin by ox team with Iver Bagstad, leader of the wagon train. Most of them located in Violin Township with Iver about 4 miles west of the present town of Violin.

In 1869 the first Vangen Church was erected on a piece of land donated by Guro Levorson one-half mile east of what is now Mission Hill. This church, which still stands is believed to have been the first Lutheran church in either of the Dakotas.

The harvest was bountiful in 1869, so Iver Bagstad bought the first threshing machine in Yankton County and that fall he threshed all the grain in Yankton County and some in Clay County. The settlers began to increase their acreages and to build better homes. There was some talk of the need for a railroad, but the coming of the “iron horse” seemed a long way off.

Time of Growth

Much of the bottomland was settled now, by the settlers from eastern states and immigrants from Norway and Ireland. As the years 1870 - 1873 brought unusual progress and prosperity, they also brought more settlers and the immigrants now included some from Holland and Denmark. Calle Johnson, who had been in America for three years, working on the Union Pacific Railroad, decided to settle in Dakota. After a visit to Denmark, he returned in April of 1870 and purchased a relinquishment. He met his bride-to-be in Sioux City and after loading her trunk and some supplies on the wagon, walked with Marie a distance of 20 miles to their new home. That night they accepted the hospitality of an Indian family for the night. They purchased two cows from the Indians the next morning, tied them behind their wagon and finished their journey. After they arrived at their homestead, they walked several miles to the home of Reverend Emil Christenson to be married.

The wedding guests, three Danish bachelors, Peter Jorgensen, Christian Hansen and Peter Lund, and the groom each had a dance with the bride on the floor of the tiny shanty. Then they had cookies and “coffee punch” and sang Danish songs. That night one of their cows gave them a wedding present, a calf which they named “Squaw”.

The Jens Junkers arrived in Sioux City on the 6th of July that same year. Their son Ole had come the year before. Daughter Caroline kept a diary during their trip. The excerpt below was translated from the Danish by her granddaughter:

“The next morning we broke camp very early and started off. The air was very warm and the wind blew a little so we didn’t notice the heat too much. At noon we camped right under the open sky near a city called Elk Point. It is called a city but it is not as large as one of our little country villages in Denmark. The mosquitoes were so bad we hardly slept at all and when we awoke were full of red spots on both our hands and faces where they had stung us.”

Other Danes who settled in the community were the Soren Mortensens, Niels J. Nielsen, Hans and Nissen Smith.

Daily stages travelled through the area leaving mail and passengers at stage stops which served as hotels and postoffices and also furnished feed, water and shelter for horses used on the route. The telegraph was completed to Yankton at this time but had
no offices in the smaller places. River traffic was heavy during the summer months, with steamboats carrying cargoes and passengers to agencies and forts on the Upper Missouri. On October 27, 1870, the Alabama, a 160 by 32 foot stern wheeler, sank east of St. Helena Island. Her cargo was mainly flour and whiskey consigned to the Yellowstone district. Efforts to locate her wreckage were futile until 1906. Then, after 36 years, the boat is said to have suddenly risen and floated from its murky grave!

One day that winter, while Calle Johnson left his bride and went to the river cutting logs for a new house and for fuel, two young Indians came to the door their arms spattered with blood and carrying hunting knives and guns. Marie was frightened but tried not to show it but served them coffee and bread and gave them some flour and salt. They left but were soon back with the heart and liver of an antelope which they laid on the table. Marie then understood the reason for the blood and was no longer afraid.

The Norwegians of Norway Township had been meeting in homes for religious services, but in 1870, land was donated by Hans Myron and a subscription of cash and labor was taken and in the spring of 1871, the actual work on the Bergen Church was begun with Aslak Iverson as building superintendent and Ole Bottolfson, R. Brunick and Lars Anderson as assistants. The first service was held in the new church on July 19, 1871. Due to hard times, the church was not finished inside before 1880 and the tower and bell were added in 1891.

In the spring of 1872, the settlers were alarmed by the great epizootic which swept the country. This was a sort of influenza which attacked the horses, weakening them very seriously and incapacitating them from work for some time. This was a great inconvenience to those who used horses to put in their crops. Those with oxen were not affected. It is said that not a horse escaped the disease but they eventually recovered and were able to work again.

That fall, General Custer's army followed the military road which wound its way through the settlements. His army camped just east of Yankton that cold winter. The army of General Sherman travelled up the Missouri that year to join Sully's army near Devil's Lake, North Dakota on a flotilla of 100 steamers, the largest concentration of steamers ever on the Missouri. On their trips down the Missouri, steamers were usually loaded with buffalo hides, furs, gold dust and passengers, sometimes wounded soldiers. In addition to the steamboats, river traffic downstream often included makinaws, flat-bottomed craft of cut lumber with pointed bows, squared sterns and low gunwales constructed at the site of embarkation and guided on the trip by long poles. Machinaws usually carried miners or trappers and their wares. With the coming of the railroad, boating on the lower Missouri declined.

The Dakota and Northwestern Railroad Company had met with the Missouri Valley Railroad Company in Sioux City in February of 1870 and agreed to build a line of road from Sioux City to Yankton by September of 1871. They wished to prevent the building of a railroad from Lemars to Yankton which was under consideration as this would have by-passed Sioux City. A special session of the territorial assembly was convened to authorize the issuance of county bonds. The U.S. Congress raised a question as to the legality of the special session, but they approved the law passed by this special session.

The first grading was one mile of work completed near Elk Point in Union County in the summer of 1870 under a contract awarded to George Stickney, the chief engineer of the company. Instead of being done by steam shovel as it would have been at a later time, the grading was done by great gangs of mules pulling scrapers. The grading cost $1,300 to $9,000 per mile. The first Dakota Southern rail was laid at Sioux City, August 29, 1872. Each 24 ft. rail cost $18. Four hundred forty rails cost $7,929 and built a mile of road, which also required 40 kegs of spikes at $38 a keg and 2,500 ties at 50 cents each. Labor for laying one mile of track averaged about $425.

Many of the settlers hired out to cut ties from the oak groves along the river. Others worked on the grading crews, laid rails or drove spikes. Peder Olson, then a lad of 17, said his job was to lay four spikes on each tie while some one else followed and drove them in.

The first locomotive crossed the Sioux River on the first of October, 1872. The cars of the construction train reached Elk Point on October 23, and carried passengers by November 13. By December 10th, passengers were able to travel to Vermillion. The road was completed to Yankton on January 25th, 1873 at a cost of $15,000 per mile. On February 3rd, regular passenger service between Sioux City and Yankton was instituted with the following schedule: leave Sioux City at 7 A.M., reach Lincoln at 10:45, Gayville at 11:20 and Yankton at 12:20. The return trip started from Yankton at 1:20 and arrived in Sioux City at 6:35. Sometimes the train was stopped between Gayville and Vermillion so that passengers could hunt prairie chickens.

The quarter section of land for the townsite of Gayville was sold by Halvor Brynelson to Charles G. Wicker on December 24, 1872 for $1.00. This was a part of the land that he had promised the Knut Olsons if they would come and take care of him until he died. Some think they got him drunk and then got him to sign it away. A store operated by Mr. A. B. Willey and located about where the Glen Bye home is now, had been started in the fall of 1872. The Post office was transferred from the stage stop south of the townsite to Gayville on March 17, 1873 and the charter filed on June 1, 1873.

During the year 1873, the community of Lincoln moved north of the old post road to be close to the railroad and the town of Meckling was plotted. The Dakota Herald reported that the Lincoln post office would be absorbed by Meckling, but post offices were maintained both at Meckling and Lincoln until 1900. By September 9th, C. N. Taylor had moved his house and barn over near the railroad track and started living in the new village of Meckling.

The towns of Gayville and Meckling differed from the usual western town which was located with
the hope of populating the country around it. But in
the case of these towns, the area was already thickly
populated, with a farmer on every quarter section of
land.

The spring of 1873 had opened up unusually
early and seeding was in progress by the first of
April. Then, starting on April 20, an impenetrable
blizzard raged for thirty six hours. It didn’t hurt the
farmer, because the harvest that year was abundant,
with 30 bushel per acre wheat which was selling for
$1.30 a bushel, and the people generally prospered.
Grain and garden products of the area competed for
prizes at the 4th annual exhibition of the Clay
County Agricultural Society held on October 3rd and
4th. On October 21, there was a destructive prairie
fire which consumed a quarter section of timber for
the Myron Brothers as well as other property. On
November 23, another prairie fire swept across the
bottom north of Meckling which was stopped by the
Vermillion River.

The year 1874 began under the most hopeful
conditions, but the last week in August, swarms of
grasshoppers flew in and devoured the unharvested
crops, even clogging the machinery. The more recent
settlers were destitute and even though their more
established neighbors tried to help them by sharing
their store of provisions to tide them over the coming
winter, for many, the distress became so acute that
county aid was insufficient and General Beadle went
east for donations of food and clothing. Corn bread
became staple food and parched wheat took the place
of coffee. The U. S. government appropriated
$150,000 for food for the grasshopper sufferers in
Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota. Clay County received
about 8 tons of flour and 4 tons of bacon and Yank-
ton County received 5½ tons of flour and 3 tons of
bacon. Many of the settlers had to depend on twisted
prairie hay for fuel.

The 1874-1875 legislature continued in session
until the 14th day of January and accomplished some
startling legislation: it acted to reduce the legal rate
of interest from 18 percent to 12 percent; and a bill
was introduced by A. L. Pan Osdal, repudiating the
payment of the two hundred thousand dollar bond
issue which Yankton County had passed in behalf of
the southern Dakota Railroad. This bill passed but
was vetoed by Governor Pennington. Practically the
entire population of the county were in support of the
bill because it was felt that the railroad had failed to
live up to its obligations. This session also authorized
a bureau of immigration.

The settlers were not only at the mercy of the
grasshoppers, fires and floods, drought and loan
sharks but early produce buyers often tricked
farmers by keeping them waiting with their ox teams
and loads of produce or livestock until darkness was
approaching. Then they could force them to accept a
lower bid ($2.50 for $3.00 hogs and $2.00 for $3.00
hay), which the farmer had to take to avoid taking it
home again. Along with the high interest rates, the
homesteader seemed to be at the mercy of man as well
as the elements.

City people, even in those days, romanticized
farming for the farmers, although not many chose to
move to the farm with its back breaking work and
many disappointments. An editorial from an 1875
issue of Vermillion paper illustrates this:

“There is a growing dislike in most communities
to farming and a growing tendency to get into
villages and cities and overcrowd the various trades,
reducing wages and deranging the equilibrium of
labor. The farm is the nursery of morality, thrift,
independence, comfort, social and political honor and
is the foundation of our national progress and
wealth. Agriculture is the basis of all industry.”

The winter of 1874-1875 was an extraordinarily
severe and prolonged one with deep snow. Naturally
the spring brought flooding on the James, Sioux and
Missouri, but the people anticipated the high water
and were well prepared so they suffered very little
material damage from the floods.

In May, Amund Hansen lost all his farm build-

ings to a prairie fire. In June, grasshoppers passed
over Dakota in immense swarms, which for days at
a time darkened the sun, but fortunately, they did not
alight to do any damage to the crops and they were
the most prolific and extensive of any yet produced in
the history of the territory. A territorial fair and cen-
tennial celebration (of the United States) was held at
Yankton on September 29 and 30 and October 1st and
some 2500 exhibits were shown. Railroads pledged
low rates for the occasion.

In 1876 crops looked good and earlier grains were
gathered without loss, but on the 25th of July, the
grasshoppers again came in appalling numbers and in
a day, destroyed all of the uncut grain, the fields of
corn and the gardens. In spite of this, potatoes were
selling for $1.06 a bushel and gooseberries for 8 cents
a quart.

S. C. Fargo spent several summers freighting to
Deadwood where he opened a store with his son as
the operator. He used 16 head of oxen hitched to 3
wagons and made two trips each summer. He started
from Gayville, travelled up the James River Valley
by way of Scotland, Rockport and Firesteel, Fort
Thompson and Fort Pierre, then across to Deadwood.
He returned to Ft. Pierre where he picked up his
second load which had come that far by steamer.
His wife and the hired help prepared butter (packed
in brine) and garden produce and hauled it to the docks
at Yankton where it was loaded on the steamers.

In the fall of 1876, an incident occurred which
caused more concern after it happened than at the
time. A group of horsemen stopped at the Nash home
south of Meckling and one of the horsemen went into
the house and came out with a flour sack full of sup-
plies. The 11 year old son of the Nashes accompanied
the well-mannered young man on the horse out to the
road to join his companions. He petted the horses and
chatted with the men as they prepared to move on.
Later his family discovered that he had been talking
to the notorious James brothers and their compan-
ions. The horsemen rode on to have a meal with the
Wadsworths at Gayville, which they paid for with a
silver dollar, and then spent the night with the Snows
north of town. It was later learned that the gang moved on to Northfield, Minnesota where they staged an unsuccessful bank robbery from which the only ones to escape were Frank and Jesse James.

The winter of 1876-77 was an exceptionally severe one but the warm spring weather of 1877 hatched out myriads of young grasshoppers and it seemed that a serious calamity threatened. So on Friday, May 4th, all the settlers fasted and assembled to ask Divine assistance. About this time, a little red bug was found to be destroying the infant hoppers and unhatched eggs. By the middle of June, the grasshopper plague had ceased to be more than a memory and the grain crops promised an abundant yield. That fall, in spite of a destructive hailstorm which hit part of Clay County, 435,000 bushels of wheat, 35,000 bushels of oats, 700 head of cattle and 750 hogs were shipped east from Vermillion.

In 1878, crops were hit by blight. In March of 1879, there were many prairie fires, sometimes harmlessly creeping along over the land when there was no wind, then springing into alarming activity as winds grew stronger. One fire started at Haggin’s Bend, reached Gayville about five on the afternoon of March 11, jumped the railroad and passed by the town moving to the northeast. So the residents of Gayville went to bed thinking they were safe. But about midnight, the wind changed and whipped sparks into a wall of flame which almost surrounded the town. Everyone turned out to fight the blaze and the town was saved. Several homes and barns in the rural area were burned including all the buildings at the Alonzo Goss farm and the barn of his neighbor Frank Worley. Frank, himself, was badly burned trying to save his horses. These farms were about three miles south of Gayville.

An incident which happened on June 13, 1878, was reported in a Yankton paper: Just as the train was slowing for its regular stop at Gayville, a passenger who had been acting strangely, jumped off and ran south across the prairie. The conductor notified Constable J. E. Hardin who mounted a horse and accompanied by Greenway Haggm, started after the fleeing man. Upon reaching him they found that he was exhausted and bleeding profusely from self-inflicted knife wounds. He was taken to the Bagstad hotel and a doctor called to treat his wounds. He told them he had escaped in Milwaukee from a lynching and a ten year prison term for rape. He was trying to reach his brother who lived at Tabor. Word was sent to his brother, and it was expected that he would probably be moved there when possible. There was no mention of extradition.

The Big Flood

The winters of 1876 until 1879 had not produced enough snow for good sleighing, but the winter of 1880 - 1881 opened up with a four day blizzard which began on October 15th. Although it wasn’t accompanied by severe cold, it caused a great deal of suffering among the newcomers as many of them did not have their houses and stables completed. Livestock suffered as thousands of head were out on the prairie at the time, and it interrupted the threshing which the farmers were busy with at the time. About a foot of heavy snow fell, the rivers froze over and railroad traffic was tied up by the huge drifts. This was the beginning of a winter which has become historic... the hard winter of 1880.

The snow that fell on October 15th remained and as the winter wore on, storm followed storm. By the end of December, the railroad’s supply of coal was running out and it was sometimes necessary to use corn for fuel. Fifty bushels of corn would run the train from Yankton to Elk Point. By mid-January, eleven feet of snow had fallen. On the second of February, a snow storm set in which continued without cessation for nine days. Farmers turned to tunneling to reach their barns and livestock. Many settlers had run out of flour, but they ground wheat into a sort of graham flour in coffee mills. They burned twisted hay for fuel.

Shortly after the February snowstorm, a thaw softened the surface of the drifts and then froze, forming a hard crust which made sleighing very good. The winter cold remained until the last week in March. Then the snow melted and the prairies became a vast lake. On Sunday, March 27th, the river ice broke into heaving, grinding chunks of ice which started moving downstream. But when they reached Vermillion, the ice chunks gorged and the icy water began to spread over the lowlands west of Vermillion. It subsided some that night and there was hope that the danger was almost over. The water had come in so fast that there was no chance to escape to the bluffs so most of the rural people went to Meckling. The Taylor and Pierlsol homes were the only ones with second floors, so all those who didn’t go to the elevator were housed on the second floor of the two homes. G. L. Taylor, in his diary, wrote a day to day account of their experiences during the flood. He told of hauling hay through the melting snow waters and getting some potatoes from a farmer’s storage cellars to sell in the store. These potatoes came in handy when their second floor rooms housed 25 people. The Pierlsol home contained 18 people: the John Spatz family, the Nash family, the John Weitzels, and the Piersols and their three children. One of the Piersol boys got a dunking when he fell down the stairwell but Mr. Weitzel rescued him. The Piersols ground their seed corn in a coffee grinder to make corn mush.

On Tuesday, March 29th, the broken ice gorged at Haggin’s Bend and the next day the water went over the banks and backed up the Jim to overflow the bottom from bluff to bluff. Boats were sent out from
Yankton which succeeded in rescuing several families. B. V. Loosemore said, "While I was only six years old at the time, I think I would have remembered it, had I been only half that age. The good people of Yankton came out in yaws and picked up our family, the Garveys and the Shepherdsons and we were housed in a vacant store on Broadway. They must have fed and clothed us, as we didn't have so much as a chicken."

George, one of the Garvey children, gives a vivid description of the disaster: "I can remember all of us standing out in the yard listening to the roar of the water and the crashing of the ice, wondering if it would reach our place. Soon it did come, about a foot deep, rushing toward us. Our parents carried as many of our belongings as they could upstairs and piled the rest on tables. Then we waited. All night we listened to the roar of the water as it rushed by, carrying all manner of debris with it. Every now and then a huge chunk of ice crashed against the house causing it to tremble and shake. But, somehow, the house withstood all that the old river could throw at it. The next day we could see nothing but one big body of water around us. A neighbor who lived closer to the Missouri moved his family of three children and some livestock to our place, thinking they would be safer there. He and my brother now loaded his three children, my two sisters and me into a skiff and started to row us toward the Morey granary where several families were staying. But the current was so strong we couldn't make it. Then he swung the boat around to the north to a farmhouse which already had several people in its two upstairs rooms. We lived there several days until the boats came down from Yankton. All the cattle and hogs were gone but a few work horses were saved. Machinery was carried away or broken up by the ice.

Anna Howard Magorien was one of 23 people who lived for a week in the upper floor of the granary with water seven feet deep around them. The men built a shelf to climb onto if the water came higher. The women had a hand grinder and all day long they took turns grinding corn to feed the group. They were finally taken by boat to the bluff north of them where they were met by Anna's uncle. He took them to his home on the bluff north of Meckling. Anna's grandfather, Milton Morey, saved a few cows and horses. Joe Volin saved his horses by bringing them into the house but all his cattle were swept away. His family lived upstairs for several days until rescue boats came.

Clark West and his son Lewis were caught in the granary where they were butchering. They sailed from the granary to the house in a wagonbox and joined the rest of the family on the second floor of the house until the high water subsided. Then they stayed there until they could get horses. They lived on the meat of the hog they had butchered. They lost 29 head of cattle.

Terrible as this flood, only one life was lost. Joseph Inch lived alone but made many trips back and forth to his brother's home, riding huge cakes of ice, jumping from one to another until he reached his destination. On one of these trips, a chunk of ice turned over with him and he went under and was drowned. In addition to the loss of their brother, the Inches lost 170 head of livestock. The water stood 4½ feet deep in the cabin so Thomas and his brothers lived for four weeks in the upper part of a granary.

Peter Kolberg and his father were on a haystack for two days, shivering from the cold, yet having to change their position constantly because of the heat arising from the wet hay underneath. They managed to bring flour from the house and made porridge from the milk from a cow who shared their haystack, and cooked it over a fire built from fence rails on a cake of ice.

Patrick Dineen lost everything—his log house was partly carried away in addition to his 79 head of cattle and 13 horses. Some of his livestock floated past the James Blodgett farm on two strawstacks. Mr. Blodgett had built his barn on a high spot and he saved most of his livestock and some of his neighbors', by keeping them in his barn.

Pastor Halvor Hustvedt, the Lutheran minister who lived in the house in Gayville where the Craigs now live, heard rumors of possible flooding so he hurriedly built an eighteen inch platform in the barn for his horses to stand. Then, while chopping wood, he saw a rush of water a foot high come around the corner of his house. He sent his wife and sister Martha with the two children through the knee high water to the hotel. He stayed long enough to throw hay to his ponies. When he left the horses, the water was up to their knees and as he made his way to the hotel, it was up to his waist. Some of the neighbors moved into the second floor of the Olson house with them and the older ones entertained the small children as they huddled on the beds by making bark boats. Regina, then about eight, remembers that they laid planks on chairs so they could move some of their food supplies and their kitchen stove upstairs. Her father spent some time across town in the Willey store, building a boat. But then a boat came from Yankton and took them to the Volin bluff where they found some kind hearted people to live with until the water went down.

Julius Berkeley was living at the hotel and working for Bagstad and Aaseth. He became chief cook and fed the boat crews as they worked to rescue the stranded families. The people of Gayville worried that the ice gorge which had formed immediately outside the town would let go and uproot the buildings. But the water level rose gradually and Gayville was saved.

South of Gayville, the Peter Lunds had moved upstairs and burned their seed corn for fuel. They had meat because they had just butchered. The Fargo home stood in 26 inches of water. They tied their house to the healthy young trees around the house and moved upstairs. After the water went down, they
salvaged the hides of 56 head of cattle that had died. The ice had formed on the tails of the animals in chunks the size of washtubs so that they had twisted off from the weight of the ice and the movement of the water.

Calle Johnson was awakened by the barking of his dog. He went downstairs to discover several inches of water in the house. He put the dog on the table and went back to bed. The next day the water was three feet deep. The nine people lived on bread and dirty water for four days. Then the men went down in the icy water and moved the stove upstairs plus a can of cream and a frying pan. They cut a hole in the roof and jumped to the wood pile for some dry firewood. Then they could dry the men’s clothes and have pancakes to eat. Mr. Johnson had tried to get to the livestock in the barn but the current was so strong that it almost carried him away.

The Junkers were butchering and preparing for the wedding of their son Jens, when the flood waters came. Their house was built on a high spot so the water didn’t come into their house. As soon as they could, they made their way on the thin ice to their neighbors, the Calle Johnsons, to see how they were faring. After ten days of cold, hunger and terror, the Johnsons were overjoyed to see the Junker men. With the three older children dressed warmly and tied by lengths between the adults who were carrying the three younger ones, the party carefully made their way to the Junker home. They were happy to help eat the food which the Junkers had prepared for their son’s wedding. When the Johnson men were able to get back to the farm, they found all their hogs and sheep drowned, half of their cattle dead and five horses living but nearly starved. They had stood with water over their backs and had chewed up their mangers in their hunger. At the Mortensens they probably had similar experiences but also an added one—at the height of the flood, on April 7th their daughter Matilda was born.

Bad as conditions were in these areas, they were far worse in the areas to the east, where the water was 11 feet deep in places. Louis Berg was marooned in a corn crib and except for ripe corn on the ear which he tried to eat off the cob, was incoherent from the suffering from cold and starvation when he was rescued. A house with the families of Judge Bottolfson and O.J. Hansons in it was lifted from its foundation and floated away. The men made their way to the roof and fashioned a boat of sorts. As the house sailed through the shortened channel of the river, it started to sink lower in the water. The two families got into their makeshift boat and paddled to solid ground and found refuge in the house of a Mr. Thompson near Burbank. A boat containing some of the Hans Hansons and two of the Bottolfson children, rowed for hours in the ice filled water and then found refuge on the roof of a barn where they remained for six days and nights until they were rescued by a searching party. They had had only an uncooked chicken and raw beef from a drowned cow and were starving and delirious.

R. H. Jones, like all the other people on the bottom, did not believe that a ruinous flood could occur. He did take the precaution to move his family and livestock to the home of J. Redrick which stood 3 feet higher than his own. The water came over and through the deep snow to a depth of 18 inches around the Redrick house. On the 30th it fell six inches so they thought it had reached its crest. But that evening there was a distant roar and the water began to rise. They moved what they could up stairs and moved the livestock to higher spots. The water raised 3½ feet and continued rising but more slowly. We could hear the cattle bawling and struggling as the stronger crowded the weaker off the high places. They would occasionally hit the house as they floated off. On the 31st they were in five feet of water and it was still rising. They finished their boat and on April 4th pushed it through an upstairs window, loaded it with bedding and started on the ice for the bluff. The junked and children following in single file. A rescue boat picked up the children and started back with the women walking on the ice but holding onto the side of the boat as it cut its way through the thin ice. But when they reached what had been clear water, they found it full of ice chunks and were forced to turn back to firmer ice. They packed the women and children in the rescue boat with quilts over their shivering bodies, they tried to rest. The men slept in the makeshift boat. The next morning the channel had cleared and they reached the bluff safely. About 75 of the people who had been marooned in the Meckling elevator, after being rationed a biscuit a day, were happy to see the yawl which came to rescue them. They followed the boat as it cut its way through the thick ice and then boarded it and the other large boats which met them and took them to places of safety and warmth and warm food.

The men at the Taylors’ went out in their boat to search for those who might be marooned. They found a Mr. Blanchard who was along and so weak he couldn’t stand up. Some little puppies had lain on his feet and kept them from freezing. When the ice was strong enough to bear their weight they went to the store and cut a hole in the roof. They fished out some flour and bacon to feed the people in their house, and the Piersols. When the waters lowered, the Piersols set out on a homemade raft for the Bluffs. They landed safely on the Ellingson farmstead and enjoyed the first square meal in a good many days. For two months they lived with a friend, a Doc Watson, who lived a few miles north of Vermillion. At its height, the flood waters had been within two inches of the second floor of the Piersol house. By April 14th, the flood waters had dropped and left eight inches of mud on the floor of the homes. They were now able to use water from the well which they really appreciated. And one farmer, Ole Olson, must have saved at least one cow, because he delivered milk to the store that day. The area around Meckling was swept clean of everything. Houses, barns, fences,
cattle, horses, hogs and sheep were destroyed leaving the settlers with little else but the clothes on their backs and their bare lands. The river had flooded 55,000 acres in Yankton County and 75,000 in Clay County. It had taken much but it also gave some back as it enriched the ground. Twelve miles of grading and railroad had to be rebuilt. Many of the settlers constructed sod shanties in which to live until they could rebuild permanent homes. Ole B. Larson put up a house on his farm and planned to start anew, as did many others. In five years, the results of that catastrophe were invisible, but remained forever in the memories of those who had experienced it.
Old Buckman homestead northeast of Gayville, where Ray lives

Soren Miller farm, where Hans Miller now lives
This house was built from brick fired on the farm, by the Calle Johnson family in 1882. It burned down in the nineteen thirties and was replaced later by a modern brick home. The log house from which they escaped during the flood still stands.

This house still stands on the original Mortensen farm west of the Danish Church. The porch has been removed and a kitchen added.
Drought and Depression

The terrible winter of 1880-1881 was followed by the other extreme in 1881-1882. There was simply no winter at all. Day after day and week after week, Dakota was flooded with glorious sunshine. In every month, plowing was done. Men drove throughout the winter without overcoats. The cattle were fed in the open sun-cured grass. In February, seeding began and by the middle of March most of the wheat seeding was completed. H.O. Burtness of Lincoln planted a field of corn in April and by August 15th was assured of a good crop. Mr. Burtness believed in early planting and thorough cultivation. On September 2nd, the small grain crop had all been harvested and the yield was very good, also the potatoes and garden crops.

The period from 1882 through 1885 was a boom period with fairly good crops and good prices. There were probably a greater number of immigrants in 1882 than in any other year. During this time several substantial brick homes were built by the Danish settlers south of Gayville. The bricks were made and fired on the Calle Johnsen place. In 1883, there was a great deal of political maneuvering, resulting in the removal of the territorial capital from Yankton to Bismark. In 1885 the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad was built into Yankton from Sioux Falls, resulting in the subsequent emergence of the villages of Mission Hill and Volin.

A great drought in 1886 accompanied by hot winds cut the crops in many sections and furthermore, the prices were low — the boom period was over. A political movement among the settlers called the Farmer’s Alliance emerged which elected a number of legislators.

The winter of 1887-1888 was another severe one, and on January 12th, after a mild winter day, a severe blizzard hit Dakota with a ferocity never before dreamed of. In the northern part of the state, it began early in the morning before very many had left home for school or other reasons. But in the central part of the state and the southern portions it came when people were at work and children at school. One moment it was bright and warm; the next moment without the slightest warning, the storm hit in unexpected fury. For fifteen hours it continued, blinding, impenetrable, intensely cold; the atmosphere was filled with needles of ice driven by a furious gale, accompanied by a deafening roar. Then it was gone and nature smiled out again as bright and innocent as a morning in May. One hundred and twelve citizens of Dakota perished. The storm hit the bottomlands in midafternoon and there were many courageous rescues of school children and many teachers kept their pupils in the schools overnight. There were good crops that year and prices had improved.

Eighteen hundred and eighty-nine, the year of statehood, was probably the hardest year in the history of Dakota. With that year began the period of verses which cut our population, destroyed our credit and for a time made Dakota a name of ill repute. Thousands abandoned their homesteads and surrendered their property to trust and mortgage companies. Many of these companies failed because of the failure of the farmers. Railroad building was at a standstill and no new building was being planned. Governor Mellette paid for the cost of administering relief out of his own pocket. The Citizen’s League told the farmers that statehood was the solution to his problems but they soon realized that many of the statehood leaders were the same brand of men who ran the territorial government, who had a mortgage on his farm, who had sold him farm machinery and who had bought his wheat at starvation prices.

The absence of a free market for their produce together with a declining income made the farmers receptive to organization. In April 1880, Milton George, editor of the Western Rural in Chicago in his campaign against monopoly, organized the Northern Farmer’s Alliance. The Alliance first appeared in Dakota Territory in February 1881 when a group of Yankton County farmers received a charter. They formed cooperatives for buying machinery, insurance, etc. but these business ventures failed in the early nineties. In 1890 crops were a little better and prices somewhat better. Hope was raised in 1891 by bumper crops and better prices. The congregations of the Lutherans and the Methodists in Gayville built houses of worship. In 1893, the Danish congregation south of Gayville bought land for a cemetery and built a church in the center of the land. The newly built church was blown down several months later in a windstorm. Two of the members stood looking at the ruins of their church. One remarked, “Well, there lies eleven hundred dollars!” The other calmly offered a hundred dollars to start a new building fund. And so it was unanimously decided to rebuild. Men of the parish salvaged what was left of the first church and helped carpenters build the second. Even the children were put to work straightening nails. Meals were served to the workers at the nearby Smith home.

1894 was another dry year and the distress was so great that officials abandoned all efforts to collect taxes. Crops were poor and prices low. In February of 1895, the Legislature empowered county and township officials to furnish seed grain. In 1895 and 1896 the crops were better but the prices were still low. The winter of 1896-1897 was a hard one followed by flooding from the James River over most of the bottom between Mission Hill and Gayville. Flood waters had subsided before the end of April. There was not much destruction except to the railroad track and road beds. A good harvest and better prices came that summer. Another severe winter brought about the end of the dry cycle and crops were abundant and prices good in 1899. Farmers increased
their herds and there was a feeling of prosperity. Improvements in the cultivation of corn led to the introduction of pork production and to feeding beef cattle.

The railroads built livestock yards and loading chutes in both Gayville and Meckling so that farmers could bring their livestock in to be loaded and shipped to Sioux City or Chicago. The farmers along the county line developed a plan for getting their cattle loaded in an orderly fashion. They made arrangements for livestock cars for a certain day. Then Mr. Andre who was closest to town would rise early and get his cattle onto the road first and start toward Gayville. A short time later, Peter Lund would start his herd on the way, followed by the Fargos and then the Junkers. It was quite a memorable sight — the herds making their way, one bunch after the other down the road.

These cattle were shipped to Sioux City Stock Yards by O.S. Larson. Ole at far left.

Ira and Tillie Harden with turn-of-the-century transportation.
Transportation at the turn of the century

The George Taylor kids

Gayville's Champion Baseball Team of 1909: Iver Olson, LF; Elmer Aaseth, 1st base; Louis Aaseth, 3rd B; Jensen Mgr.; Merence Ryken, RF; Wynne, umpire. Henry Ryken, CF; Anderson, pitcher; Turner, catcher; Wm. Inch, 2nd B; Waterbury, short stop.
Rural Free Delivery, Claus Jensen, mail carrier

First car on the bottom — J.N. Junker's Rambler

Dredging the Clay Creek Ditch
At the turn of the century, conditions were looking up. Crops had been good for several years and prices for their products had improved. Rural free delivery brought mail service to the rural areas about this time. On January 26, 1900, an association of 19 members of the South Dakota Beekeepers was organized. Local members were P.N. Cross, H.A. Burke and Mrs. H.E. Van Allen of Gayville and Thomas Chantry and W.E. Dole of Meckling. Hay in the bale was selling at $4 per ton; in the stack, $2 per ton.

Members of the county commissioners of Yankton and Clay Counties met on January 29th to talk over suggestions for securing protection against floods on the bottomlands. A plan was proposed to build an earth and willow dike about 4 feet high and 16 feet wide from the mouth of the James River to the mouth of the Vermillion River, about one half mile back from the bank of the Missouri. It could be used for a public highway. Engineer W.K. Bruce said he thought $75,000 would complete it. This plan evidently wasn’t considered feasible.

The town of Gayville was incorporated in 1901. William McMaster arrived to manage the newly organized Security State Bank of Gayville. The winter of 1901-1902 was mild, but on March 13, there was a heavy rain and snow fall with high winds and extreme cold. The spring remained cold and corn had to be planted late. There was a severe frost on June 21 and a frost again on August 13, with a killing frost on September 13. Rainfall was normal and well distributed, but the corn crop must have been very poor. Dairying was becoming popular and the cream separator had come into general use.

1903 was a good crop year, as was the remainder of the decade, generally speaking. Jens Junker bought a Rambler the first car on the bottom in 1903. Before long, of course, many others had taken the big step from horses to horsepower. Old timers like to tell the story about Ole Junker and his first car. The dealer had told him how to run it but either neglected to tell him how to stop it, or in the excitement, Ole forgot. When he reached home, he realized he didn’t know what to do, so after several turns around the yard, he headed out on the road again. His brother Jens was a passenger but he enjoyed his brother’s predicament and wouldn’t answer when Ole yelled in Danish, “Stop it, Jens!”

In 1904, the village of Fullerville was established four miles west of Gayville as a convenience to grain and livestock farmers of that area. The Gayville Observer told about their election of town officers including a constable and “street commissioner”!

J.S. Fargo returned from Chicago that fall where he had been with a shipment of 13 cars of cattle. It was the first time cattle had gone from here to Chicago without stopping for feed and water. Albert Ahrendt, son of Lou Ahrendt, while plowing, had the misfortune to lose four mules by being struck by lightning. Albert was rendered unconscious and remained so for about ten hours.

The panic of 1907 brought low prices again and area farmers were in for more trouble as they lost 6000 hogs from a cholera epidemic. On July 27th, 1907, the Yankton and Clay Commissioners met to discuss the proposal for the Volin or Clay Creek Ditch for reducing flood damage and draining the lowlands. On March 12, 1908, at a joint meeting of the Yankton and Clay county board of commissioners, a contract was signed to build the Clay Creek Ditch, or “Little Panama” as it was called. By April 30th, the contractors had begun dredging. There was opposition to the ditch and the method of assessment; its completion was delayed for years, some farmers even losing their farms in the fight against the ditch.

The year 1909 will be remembered by Gayville area residents as the year of the great baseball team. They played an undefeated season with the following schedule: Volin, 9-3; Volin, 9-5; Meckling, 14-0; Irene, 6-1; Wakonda, 2-1; Wakonda, 4-2; Wakonda 11-1; Volin, 14-7; Wakonda 3-0; Wakonda 3-0; Wakonda, 4-2; Alsen, 8-0; Mission Hill, 9-4; Walshatown, 9-4; Volin, 9-4; Irene, 9-4; Wakonda, 9-4.

The greatest public celebrations during these years were held on July 4 or Independence Day. Nearly every town had a parade, a band concert, political speaker, races, tugs of war, ball games, bowery dances and fireworks. Farmers came to town early in the morning, riding in a buggy or lumber wagons or later in those new-fangled automobiles. Those who drove horses put a day’s supply of hay in the wagon and everyone packed a picnic lunch. Meckling had its park with a bowery south of town in Gjetley’s Grove. Gayville had theirs in a grove in the center of town just west of where the Legion Hall is now. Quoted below is the Gayville Observer’s description of the observance of Independence Day, 1910.

“July 4th, 1910 has come and gone but the celebration held at Gayville will live in the memory of over two thousand people as the best, the largest, the most successful and the most complete celebration that was ever held in the history of this enterprising little town.

Nature has given to the town one of the finest, yet the most convenient and accessible groves for celebration purposes that there is in the state. Starting with this essential setting of trees and the abundance of shade, the business men went to work with a will and under the able leadership and untiring efforts of Ole Odland, a program was arranged which grouped, specified and accurately timed every event of the day and that program was successfully and punctually carried out in every detail.

The unqualified approval and sincere expressions of satisfaction voiced by nearly the entire two thousand visitors who honored this town by their
presence, stamped the celebration in every respect as a decided success. Every event of the day was designed to be the very best of its kind that could be obtained for the occasion. The only portion of the program to be marred was the non-appearance of the Wakonda baseball team. After being engaged to play this game weeks ahead, they failed to put in an appearance, an absolutely inexcusable and unjustifiable act. Their name appearing upon posters, days in advance of the celebration was a solemn pledge to over two thousand people that Wakonda would play ball on that day. A broken pledge to the public reflects neither honor nor credit upon Wakonda's ball team.

The music of the day was furnished by the Gayville Concert Band, and the people of this town have reason to be very proud of our band, for it would reflect honor and credit upon a much larger town than Gayville. A great deal of credit for the remarkable showing made by the boys was due to T.B. Guthrie, under whose efficient leadership the band has made such signal advances. The town is entitled to take great pride in its band and is deeply obliged to it for the splendid musical program that it rendered.

The vocal chorus accompanied by Prof. Neutzmann's High School orchestra gave two well rendered selections which were heartily appreciated by the audience. Prof. Neutzmann is an accomplished musician and the splendid result that he obtained with the chorus and orchestra is deserving of commendation.

Rev. Eberhart, after offering the invocation, with a few well chosen remarks, introduced Prof. Thos. Sterling of the University of South Dakota, who delivered an exceptionally fine address, which received the close attention of his audience throughout.

Prof. Sterling is possessed of a keen, penetrating mind and uses a forceful command of language that is interspersed with sparkling wit. The speaker dwelt briefly upon the territorial greatness, power and wealth of our country and then discussed at some length the privileges, duties and obligations of our citizens. Mr. Sterling's remarks displayed a mind filled with a rich fund of information, gathered from extensive reading and study.

At 1:30 p.m. occurred the free attraction given by Miss Grace LeRoy, formerly of Ringling Bros. Circus. Miss LeRoy performed upon the slack wire, entertaining the crowd with many feats. Mr. Jerome then gave a fine exhibition upon the flying trapeze.

His work compared favorably with the acts of large circuses.

Following Waring's Vaudeville Circus occurred the two baseball games which were witnessed by about 1400 people, the largest crowd that ever saw a game in Gayville. Voilin proved easy for Meckling, the latter winning by a score of 9 to 1.

The 2nd game, Gayville crossed bats with Meckling. It appears that the Gayville boys had on their batting clothes, for they simply tattooed the field with hits and when the dust cleared away, Meckling awoke to the fact that they were defeated by a score of 19 to 1. The batteries for the two games were as follows:

Meckling: Jelley, Long, Dahl
Gayville: Swanson, Conklin
Volin: Raymond, Langford

Following the ball games occurred the races and tug of war. Henry Ryken won the one hundred yard dash; Dewey Pond was victorious in the boys' race. One of the most interesting and exciting events of the day was the tug of war between Clay and Yankton Counties. Emil Erickson was captain of the Clay Co. team and L.W. VanOsel served in a like capacity for Yankton Co. Each Captain certainly did himself proud in the selection of men that was made for this contest, for the brawn and strength of each county was fairly represented. For ten minutes hardly an inch was gained by either side, finally the giants from Clay began slowly but surely to gain and at last the line was crossed Clay winning the greatest tug of war ever held between two counties.

Following the tug of war, Jerome and LeRoy gave a fine attraction which consisted of high class acrobatic and tumbling work. After the second performance of Waring's vaudeville circus, the bowery dance began at 8 p.m. sharp, the music being furnished by DeLuca's orchestra, whose reputation for fine dance music needs no comment here.

The attractions of the day were brought to a climax by a big display of fireworks, which was enjoyed and appreciated by more than a thousand people. This brought to a close the biggest and best celebration ever held in the history of Gayville and the hundreds of people assembled from Clay, Yankton and Turner counties slowly dispersed to their homes with their minds vividly impressed with the fact that it was the best celebration that they ever attended.
George Jasperson in dark shirt in the back seat

Local swains and misses
Meckling Ball Team; Clark Larson and Ole Larson holding down the ends of the front row.

Gayville Ball Team—1910; V. J. Conklin, Iver Olson, Henry Ryken, Merance Ryken, Willis Odland, Elmer Aaseth, Louis Aaseth, Anderson, William Inch, Norman Pederson

Oscar Olson and his “Metz” bought from E.V. Cowman

Right—Nels Olson, riding with Alfred Rye of Irene in his “Brush”
Fargo Lake

Flood Waters, 1916, looking west from Gayville

Bennie Quick's funeral — 1918
Bottolfsons' Hart-Parr tractor

Oscar M. Olson
Tractor — 1912

Charley Gray and Louis Ahrendt
Threshing Machine
Threshing

James Snow's Rig

Conklin Bros. Threshing Crew

Bottolfson threshing crew at the cook shanty. Maxwell car in front
Prosperity and War

In 1910 and 1911, crops were poor due to drought, but in 1912, the farmers raised fine crops. Weather was generally favorable from 1912 through 1919 for growing crops and the prices were good. The most valuable contribution of this period to the future of farming was the introduction and adaptation of a Siberian strain of alfalfa by Professor Niels E. Hansen of South Dakota State College at Brookings. He went to Russia to secure seed for sub-humid alfalfa from Siberia which he named "Cossack." Several local farmers cooperated in planting alfalfa for experimental purposes, among them being Sam Van Osdel and Newton Blodgett. Newton Blodgett planted 5 acres. He cut it and piled it in ricks to dry. They hauled it in the barn and fed the cattle all winter on it. Joe Zack planted a plot of alfalfa too but he soon plowed it up. He said no man in the world would be able to keep up with it as fast as it grew. A newspaper article in the Observer of the time agreed, stating that the farmer can raise so much of it from an acre that he will wonder where it came from and how to get time to put it up. Farmers soon learned how valuable it was as a soil conditioner and incorporated it into a crop rotation plan.

Soon after the turn of the century, the rural area of the bottom began to want the convenience that telephone service would provide. Since they couldn't persuade private companies, to build lines to the farms, they formed their own companies, raised capital and built their own lines. The Gayville Rural Telephone Company No. 1, incorporated the 28th of March, 1912 with $5,000 capital stock. J.S. Fargo was the president of the company and Sivert G. Myron, secretary. Other farmers lines which were probably started at the same time were the Gayville Farmers Telephone Co., the Clay-Yankton Telephone Co., and the Vermillion Western Telephone Co. with Chris Sorenson as president. Some of the farmers around Meckling were served by a company owned by L.L. Eves called the Meckling Telephone Co. He had the switchboard in his drug store. The switchboard for the south Gayville line was in the Soren Sorenson home for a time. Later they were served through a switchboard located in the Bagstad and Aaseth store, in the Cowman store or finally out of the Paul Olson home where Mrs. Paul Olson was the operator. Gayville Township was organized Jan. 6, 1913.

A flood in early March of 1916 was caused by water backed up in the James River by a gorge in the Missouri, flooding a large part of the bottom. Gayville and Meckling were surrounded by water again. The town board of Gayville—Peter Rask, T.B. Wideland and Lars Olson—met and decided that the town should have a boat in readiness for another flood emergency. They voted to purchase a sixteen foot galvanized steel boat that was warranted to be non-sinkable as there were air chambers for and aft. Two seats and a pair of oars completed the equipment. The boat was stored in the Gayville firehouse for about fifty years and fortunately, its flat bottom never touched water.

The Missouri was however constantly cutting away at its banks, and farmers who had land along its banks found that after the high water receded they had lost a great deal of good land.

In April of 1917, the United States became involved in the war which had been raging in Europe and many of the young men of this area were drafted or enlisted and went off to train to be soldiers. In March 1918, the Gayville branch of the American Red Cross held a very successful sale with a large crowd in attendance. A short, patriotic address was given by Lieutenant Governor McMaster after which a variety of items were sold. Net proceeds were $1,675. One egg brought 53 dollars. The government instituted food regulations to avoid inflation due to shortages. Tuesdays were meatless days; Mondays and Wednesdays, wheatless days; and everyday was fat and sugar saving day. Land values were going up as evidenced by the fact that Sturk Lee sold an 80 acre tract south of Gayville for $17,600, and Lewis Berkeley paid $50,000 for a 342 acre farm. George Mortensen was advertising a Fordson tractor for $750 and an Oliver gang plow for $140. News from the war zone was anxiously anticipated. Some was good, some was bad. Word came that Dewey Van Osdel had been gassed and Roy Barrington wounded. Good news came that James Ryken, despite news to the contrary, was very much alive; however he had been hospitalized. But the severe flu epidemic caused more American deaths than the hostilities. It was especially rampant in the crowded trainee camps with their hastily set up tent barracks. But it hit civilians as well, since 1000 deaths from this epidemic were reported in South Dakota.

On November 11, 1918 the war in Europe was over and the men who had gone to fight in it came home. Some, such as Bennie Quick, Leander Young and Rudolph Christensen, came in caskets. Those who came back alive decided to form an organization to honor those who didn't and the American Legion was formed in 1925.

Passage of the 18th amendment by Congress and ratification by the states was completed in 1918, making prohibition the law of the land. In 1919, the railroad bonds, after 40 years of litigation, were finally redeemed.
Postwar Period

The census of 1920 showed the population of Gayville Township to be 500 people, the town of Gayville, 306. Meckling Township had 582 residents, Norway 417. Meckling town's population is included in the Township census since it was unincorporated. The weather was favorable for crops but in October, prices dropped sharply and a minor depression hit the country.

Corn huskers were asking 4 cents a bushel so there were more farmers than usual running the risk of bad weather and husking their own corn. The Inch Brothers bought cattle and hogs and turned them into the field to do most of the husking.

In January, 1921, William McMaster, formerly a banker in Gayville, became governor. That spring, the river was high and did a great deal of cutting. Huge timbers came downstream from Chamberlain where the railroad bridge went out. In addition, cornstalks, hay and straw could be seen floating on the surface from the cutting just above Yankton. It was a dry year and the crops were poor. Fire on May 11 swept across the extensive hay meadows east of Gayville and north of Meckling and destroyed between 50 and 60 stacks of hay. The county commissioners adopted a resolution and set hearings in relation to the cleaning of Clay Creek and the extension of the Volin lateral.

A news item in the March 7th Press and Dakotan for 1922 stated that the farmers were busy getting their machinery in shape for the opening of spring work and testing out seed corn preparatory to getting in the crop. Spring rains would be welcome to soak down the soil for plowing. Interest in soy beans was increasing and were being planted more and more in the corn for hogging off.

The WNAX radio station in Yankton started broadcasting so that radios were more in demand. Those of us who are over 50 can remember putting on the headphones for the first time and hearing music or voices through the static.

W. F. Young from south of Meckling, in Vermillion for repairs for his binder the summer of 1922 reported that the crops were exceptionally fine that year, that some shock threshing had already been done and that the grain was yielding an average of 21 to 22 bushels per acre.

In August 1923, Governor McMaster made headline news by putting the state into the retail gasoline business. Contending that the prevailing price of 26.6 cents per gallon was excessive, he ordered the supply stations of the State Highway Department to sell motor fuel to the public at 16 cents a gallon. After an agreement on a base price of 16 cents was reached by the major oil companies in a series of conferences with the governor, the state ceased its sales. The "gasoline war" continued intermittently for more than two years.

Merton Sherk and his father, Jake, bought the Missouri river ferry in 1923 from Tom and Bob Brown. The next year, Merton bought his father's share and operated the Dolle B. for several years. Only two or three cars could be hauled at a time on the 26 foot by 60 foot boat. It was later replaced by "The Comet," a boat that could haul ten cars. Cargo which was hauled on the Comet included horses and buggies, cars, cattle and even an elephant. The landing on the South Dakota side was 2½ miles west of Meckling, 1½ miles west of the Bergen Church and south to the river. The Nebraska landing was north of Wymot. Mr. Sherk sold the ferry in 1929 to Rue Spatz.

Some of the area farmers tried raising sugar beets and on January 23, 1928, checks were received for the 122.57 tons of sugar beets shipped from this area to Belle Fourche. They averaged $5.85 per ton. Further meetings were planned to consider enlarging the venture. But the local farmers evidently were not convinced. Farm produce was selling at attractive prices ... eggs were 42 cents a dozen and Fred Drale sold 61 head of hogs for an average of just over $200 per head. Row crop tractors were coming into this part of the country ... Charlie Walraven got one in 1928 and Ivan Druin, Ole Larson and Nels Nelson soon afterwards. Radios were on the increase and the new ones had built-in speakers so that everyone in the room could enjoy the program. Electric refrigerators were being perfected and radio cinema was already being attempted.

Automobiles had pretty well replaced horse drawn vehicles on the highways. Bids were let on September 16th, 1928 for the "New" Highway 50 between Yankton and Vermillion. The Missouri was cutting land on Erickson and Westine farms southwest of Meckling and some buildings had to be moved on the Erickson farm.

On October 23, 1929, the stock market crash came, which affected this area by closing the local banks and causing the depression which affected everyone.
Marvin Olson, when he played with the Boston Red Sox in the 30's

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Gayville's Pioneer Trucker, Sherman Collett
Threshing with a Farmall

Threshing at Carl Hansen's

Stacking with a horse powered stacker. Ole and Harold Rinnan

2-row cultivator
Hard Times Again

We have mentioned how the farmers drove their cattle to the local yards to be loaded on stock cars for their trip to Sioux City or Chicago in the early 1900's. This still had not changed a great deal and as he usually did, Charlie Walraven secured a livestock car and then drove his cattle to Meckling. He got them up to the yard, but found that the gate was padlocked. The depot agent was at the billiard parlor playing cards and he had the key to the lock. It was difficult enough to hold the cattle there until the wayward agent could be located, but just then the passenger train came through, whistling shrilly and repeatedly. This stampeded the cattle and they scattered in all directions so that it took a week to round them up. Mr. Walraven took a great loss through the depot agent's carelessness.

Sherman Collett had started trucking in 1924 and by now had expanded to several trucks. This was the beginning of commercial trucking which, in turn, brought about the decline in long distance shipping of livestock and the growth of nearby stockyards, livestock sales yards and packing plants.

The Olson brothers Ernie and Marvin, followed in their father's footsteps in their love for baseball. Ernie played professionally for many years, then returned to Gayville and his father's farm. Marvin went from Luther College to play for the Boston Red Sox in 1931, 1932, and 1933. Then he played for Buffalo, Baltimore, Newark and others. He managed baseball teams for nine years and has scouted for the Minnesota Twins for about ten years, making a total of more than forty years in professional baseball. Marvin and his wife continue to make their home in Gayville, too.

Times were hard in the early thirties, due to the depression, several years of drought, dust storms and grasshoppers. Then came the hard winters of 1934-1935 and 1935-1936 with lots of snow and record cold. 1936 was another dry year but the last for a while. The remainder of the decade saw the farmers getting on their feet again.

Recreation in the 1930's consisted of going to see the movies on Saturday night (talkies had come in) and going to dances...barn dances, house dances, bowery dances. Often the music was nothing more than a fiddle and a mandolin. Both square dances and round dances were popular.

The United States government had passed the Rural Electric Authority to help bring electric power to rural America. The Clay - Union Electric Corporation was one of the first in the state to organize to take advantage of this law. Electricity came to part of the area in 1939, others had to wait until 1945 when the war was over. After that, there was a big market for electrical appliances for the house and electric power tools and engines for the farmyard.

The rural telephone companies had to rebuild their lines in 1939 to conform with the new dial system, and the local “Central” was replaced by an automatic switching system. Farmers were beginning to have the conveniences of the town folks.
War and Prosperity

The population of Gayville Township had dropped from 476 in 1930 to 413 in 1940. But the farmers who were left were able to farm more land due to the availability of bigger and better machines. Stack balers had been around for a long time and some farmers, including Chester Garvey, had horse drawn balers. But in the early 40s, tractor drawn pick-up balers became available. Mounted corn pickers came in and Ray Buckman and Chris Nelson were among the first to have them. Nels Nelson had had a combine to harvest his grain for some years, but when the implement companies started making small combines which the average farm operator could afford, many more combines were seen on the bottom.

By September 23, 1940, Europe was at war and the U.S. government, in order to be prepared, started drafting men into the army. Because the national guard provided enough men at first, not many local men went right away. But after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, many of the young men from this area left. The next few years the farm labor supply became critical and young sons and daughters and wives were pressed into service on the farm.

As tractors came in, the big draft horses were gradually sold off. Many of them became meat for the hungry in Europe.

Letter writing became a recreational activity for the home folks as sons, brothers and sweethearts were sent to Africa, England, Burma and Guadalcanal. Gayville lost its newspaper again as H.K. Stolze, a Gayville teacher and publisher of the Gayville Booster had to cease publication when he was ordered to report for duty as an instructor at the Sioux Falls Air Forces Technical School in 1942. The folks back home had to redouble their efforts to keep in touch with their boys. Trinity Danish Aid put together a newsletter with Minnie Jensen as reporter, and sent copies out periodically. Price controls were established on retail goods and rationing began on some items where shortages existed: sugar, fats, gas, tires, and later, shoes and clothing.

During the summer and fall of 1945, following the end of the European War and then the Pacific War, the boys started coming home. Some took advantage of G.I. benefits and went to college. Some took up jobs that they had left when they went away. Some took over their father’s farm or rented an available farm. In November, 1945, the Chris Nelson estate offered 4 farms for sale. The largest place, 252 acres, was sold for $220 an acre, 120 acres went for $201 an acre, another 120 acre farm sold for $130 an acre and a 101 acre sold for $85 an acre. This seemed high at the time but land in this area has gone higher since then.

Bert Ficken, a hay dealer in Gayville had operated a small hay mill which ground alfalfa into meal for mixed feeds, for several years. Then in 1946, he started the B & F alfalfa mill in partnership with Frank Blevins of Pipestone, Minnesota. It had a 36 inch feeder and cylinder and had a capacity of one to four tons an hour, depending on the fineness of the meal. Power was furnished by a diesel engine. The plant employed nine men and provided a market for some of the hay grown in the area. In June of 1949, Orie Barnes bought the B & F alfalfa mill and business and operated at the same location but with many improvements, for 20 years.

Weather during the 40’s was generally good and crops were adequate.
1952 Flood Scene

Salvaging Alva Jepsen's household goods

Hans Oleson's barn
Leroy Kaufman, foster son of Mr. and Mrs. John Kaufman Sr. of Gayville, who was killed in action during the Korean War. Norman Rask, son of the Hans Rasks of Meckling was also a casualty of that war.
Missouri River Rampage

The population of Gayville Township was down to 305 by 1950; Meckling Township, 369; and Norway Township, 367. The farmer, as labor became harder to get, had to go to more and larger machines to get his work done. In order to pay for these machines and keep them in repair, he had to farm more land. Farms began to grow larger and the small towns smaller. The growth of trucks, and better roads contributed to the decline of the small town businessman. Even the small town residents deserted the local businesses who helped them pay the taxes to support the schools and services they wanted. So the businesses dropped off one by one.

After rather moderate weather of the last few years, the weather during the winter of 1951-1952 had been hard. Sheets of ice had been laid down on the prairies to the north, covered by a heavy snow blanket. The rapid melting, prevented by the layer of ice from sinking into the ground, ran off into the streams and rivers.

"There was talk of possible flooding for weeks. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers predicted it. There was flooding on the Milk River as far north as the Canadian border—still no one quite believed it would flood here.

The rising, thrashing river was doing a great deal of damage, though, and over 40 acres of good farm land was taken from the Minnie Jensen farm in three days. As the Missouri rose, the combined waters from the Missouri and the James poured across the lowlands. Although it caused some inconvenience and worry that it might go higher, the flood caused no great damage in their area. But it was taking land in huge chunks.

Most of the farms were surrounded by water and many got their basements full of the dirty water. Everyone was busy moving freezers and other things out of the basements where they could. Neighbors with boats helped the Alva Jepsens move their household goods including a piano out of their house since it appeared to be in the river's path if the cutting continued. Caterpillars were used to pull the machinery out. An army Duk was sent out by the national guard, but it proved ineffectual because the water was too deep for the wheels and too shallow for it to float. The grain combine became bogged in the lane and had to be hoisted on to barrels before the caterpillars could pull it out. The next farm buildings which appeared to be in danger were the farm places of the Julius Ericksons, and of Amanda Erickson. As the flood waters receded neighbors helped get the Erickson houses onto housemoving equipment and pulled to safety, to be moved later to Vermillion, out of the path of the Missouri for good. Then the volunteer crews moved the household goods of the Hans Olesons and started to move the house out of the path of the raging river. On April 16th, they struggled in the mud and mire with cables, tractors and bull dozers and the huge beams for hauling out the house. Meanwhile, in 12 hours, 74 rows of last year's cornstalks disappeared into the hungry river. They got some floodlights and worked through the night while women supplied them with coffee, cocoa and sandwiches. But when the river cut the road immediately in front of the house, they admitted defeat and removed their equipment. At 11:30 the night of April 17th, the earth gave way and the house settled into the murky tumbling water. It under cut one end of the barn and due to the weight of a mow of hay, one half went into the river and at that point, the river stopped cutting and the other half of the barn remained on the bank.

In the early 1950's, the country became involved in a war in Korea and some of the local boys served there. One who didn't come back was LeRoy Kaufman, nephew and foster son of the John Kaufmans. The Kaufmans were awarded the silver star to which he was entitled and his body was brought back to buried in the Danish Cemetery.

In 1952, while he was picking corn, Hans Miller became entangled in the corn picker and lost his hand. Fifty eight farmers helped to get out his corn. The women of the neighborhood served dinner to workers at the Gayville Church and Mr. Art Junker kept a supply of fuel available for the tractors. This is just one example of the many neighborly acts over the years.

Air conditioning which made the large stores and theaters such a haven in the summers of earlier years now became available for the home. REA had not only made it possible for the farmers to have electric lights but it also made available home freezers, hot water heaters, mixers, toasters, waffle irons and other household appliances. They also could install such labor saving devices as elevators, and augers to move grain and hay, feed grinders, milking equipment and machine shops. And in addition to air conditioning, the rural homes were beginning to enjoy television. The Niels Jensens had one of the first sets in the area, but reception wasn't too good until stations were closer than Omaha. Soon both Sioux City and Sioux Falls had stations and almost every home had a television set in a short time. Everyone was watching the Ed Sullivan Show, Perry Como, I Love Lucy, and the $64,000 Question.

The Gavin's Point Dam, 8 miles west of Yankton, was completed in 1957 and provided a recreation spot for local people as well as those from further away. Many invested in water skis, boats and camping equipment. The string of dams cut the danger of flooding the bottom but as the amount of water released from the dams are raised and lowered, it still causes problems for the land owners along the Missouri by cutting away the land.
Tom Garvey with his self-propelled mower

Don Kaufman, baling alfalfa hay

Neighbors baling hay for Tom Garvey after his death in an accident

One of the many hay fields on the bottom
Decade of Cooperation and Change

Although nationally this has been a period of agonizing problems, with strained race relations, campus unrest, murders of prominent figures including President Kennedy, and most of all, the Vietnam War, most of the changes in our community have been in the direction of progress.

In 1965, the town of Gayville started a clean-up, fix-up program with former banker “Red” Korteum as spark plug, and decided they badly needed new downtown sidewalks. To save money, they decided to do the work themselves. Local farmers were right in the middle of the work force. When the work was completed, they decided to have a day of celebration and since alfalfa hay has been a growing crop in the community, they named the celebration “Hay Day” and used hay as the theme of their decorations and parade. Hay is donated by the farmers for seats, parade barriers, etc. Then it is auctioned off after the celebration and the money goes to the Hay Association for the promotion of their crop.

The Sioux Alfalfa Mill has a plant near Meckling which cuts and dehydrates alfalfa for commercial feeds. In addition, The Barnes Hay and Feed Mill has moved and expanded its operation. Barnes uses baled hay and can operate the year around. In 1968, National Alfalfa Dehydrating and Milling Company installed a plant here. These plants compete with truckers from the south for the crop from 10,000 acres of alfalfa hay which produces 3 to 4 cuttings a year. Hay has become big business here.

The people of this community have also cooperated to act when illness, accidents or tragedy has struck. In 1966, when Tom Garvey was killed in a tractor accident, neighbors organized to help the family harvest the crops. When Mrs. Jean Lake, wife of a Gayville businessman, needed a kidney transplant, they helped spark a drive to raise $16,000 for the operation. Other more personal acts of kindness happen everyday.

A change which has affected the young people of the community has been the enlargement of school districts. Some of the rural schools had closed in the forties due to a teacher shortage, but the school districts continued to exist. Some continued to operate until state law provided for the elimination of common school districts. Independent schools extended their boundaries to include the common school districts in 1967. Small independent districts still found it difficult to meet state standards. Meckling voted to close their high school and send their high school students elsewhere. Gayville voted to combine with the Volin School. In 1972, they voted to reject a plan to combine with Wakonda, but a new plan may develop which will help them offer a better program and they will support it.

The town of Meckling is no longer incorporated so it is hard for them to make civic improvements. In fact, when the new highway goes through, it will take the land on which one of its few remaining businesses stands as well as several of its residences. It will then be a thriving supper club surrounded by a small residential district. There is a fertilizer business on the other side of the highway, and these homes and businesses and a Lutheran Church will mark the spot where a once bustling town stood.

Gayville has been a little more fortunate. With the efforts of Mayor Harold Jensen they managed to get the loan for a water and sewer system; the town has a few more business places left. They also have a gas pipeline which provides low cost heating. Gayville is just about holding its own.

In the last year, the Gayville Lutheran Congregation has torn down their 1891 church and built a new brick church in its place. While the new one was being built, they were invited to use the Methodist Church for their services.

An example of do-it-yourself law enforcement occurred the summer of 1971 when a man came into the Farmer’s Store, bought a few groceries and wrote a check large enough to receive some change. He then joined a man in the Cafe where they did the same thing. Jim Orton, proprietor of the store, became suspicious, took down the Iowa license and went across the street to the cafe. By then the two men had made their way to Pat Daddies, the town bar. Orton found that the names used on the checks were different and when the Iowa car left town, he commandeered two local men, Alan Sandau and Marvin Jensen and they followed the car to Meckling where the culprits went into Toby’s bar. When the Iowa men came out of Toby’s, the Gayville men confronted them and confiscated the groceries, some beer and the money they hadn’t yet managed to spend. They stopped short of tarring and feathering them.

In 1971, the farmers’ telephone lines faced the problem of rebuilding their lines to bring them up to standards necessary for direct dialing through the Bell System, or selling their lines to someone who could. They found that the best and most economical plan for them was to ask for an extension of the Dakota Coop System with headquarters in Irene. But when they successfully circulated petitions for this action, they were thwarted by action of the Bell system. The members of the farmers’ lines hired a lawyer, circulated petitions a second time with 100% signup and presented their petitions to the State Utilities Commission. This caused the Bell System to withdraw their objections and before winter, the patrons of the farmers’ telephone lines should have better service than they have had for some time.
The next battle which the people of the bottom must fight is one with “Old Muddy.” Since the dams upriver have been built, there is no longer the danger of floods that threatened the residents of the bottom lands; but the raising and lowering of the water level of the lakes for purposes of power and flood control is causing the loss of acres of rich farm land every year. Several meetings have been held to develop a plan which will satisfy all the elements involved in the control of the river so that it will stay within its general confines, and avoid the destruction of farm lands and at the same time keep the river from becoming “a mile wide and an inch deep.” When the U.S. government finishes this job which was a part of the overall plan when the dams were built, and the Corps of Engineers completes this work, there may be other problems. But we hope to be able to meet each challenge as it comes and preserve this pioneer spirit.

The declining rural population could be one of these problems. Gayville township has dropped from a high of 500 in 1920 to its present 239. Norway township had a high of 440 in 1930, now is 214. Meckling township (which includes the unincorporated town of Meckling) had a high in 1920 of 562 and has 389 people now. Unfair tax laws are helping to cut the rural population. This should concern all of us.

Postoffices, Villages and Towns

Postoffices on the Bottom

Post offices were situated in strategic spots in each neighborhood and the settler with the post office often walked or rode horseback to a stage or railroad stop to pick up mail once a week and have it ready for distribution. Of course, the stage or railroad stops were themselves, post offices.

Some of the early post offices of this area and the periods of their existence are:

Bergen: Iver Bagstad 3-2-68; discontinued 12-7-69.

White Hall: Joseph L. Lee 3-2-70; changed to Benjamin F. Lee 9-8-70. Nathan Worley 1-12-71; changed to Boreman: James W. Hatcher 5-27-72; changed to Gayville: James W. Hatcher 3-17-73.

Lincoln: Charles N. Taylor 6-27-64; changed to Han S. Myron 7-2-73. Changed to Lewis A. Larson 5-15-93; disc. 9-21-1900.

Meckling:

From the history of Cedar County, Nebraska, these words, written in 1876, tell us a little about the postal service of that time:

“At first we had the luxury of a weekly mail and some years later, mail service was increased to a daily mail. Postal Service Schedule; Eastern Mail via Gayville and Dakota Southern RR leaves each day, Sunday excepted, at 1 P.M., arrives 8 P.M. Southern mail leaves Monday and Thursdays at 1 P.M. arriving at 12 M.”

“April 11, 1877—Last Thursday Dick Holcomb skiffed it to Gayville and back, travelling about twelve miles, carrying two or three passengers each way in addition to the daily mail.

May 2, 1877—Our mail facilities in this country are in a deplorable condition. Mail a letter in St. Helena, addressed to St. James (approximately 7 miles between towns) it is forwarded to Gayville, in Dakota Territory; thence it is sent on the train to Meckling, next station east of the Dakota Southern. It has to cross and then recross the Missouri River”. There is no mention of how it gets back across the river.

Postmasters in Gayville were J. W. Hatcher 3-17-73; Elkanah Gay, 5-17-73; John L. Foskett 12-16-73; Iver Bagstad 4-25-77; Elie C. Walton 10-17-78; Iver Bagstad 4-12-80; Annie L. Meagouen 8-21-94; Ellen Hanifian 3-15-95; John O. Aaseth 8-23-1902; Eddie V. Cowman 12-11-14; Tillie Cowman 3-22-17; R. Gene Garvey . . . 1946 to the present.

Lincoln

The village of Lincoln was started by Charles N. Taylor, who came with the New York Colony in 1864 and took up a homestead along the stage line in T-93-N, R-53-W, Clay County, Dakota Territory. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor maintained a stage station and postoffice there after June 27, 1864. There may also have been a country store. There was also a blacksmith shop. There was also mention of a school and a church. Although there were no school records for these years, there quite possibly was a school because the Clay County Superintendent of Schools reported 5 school districts by 1866. The Norwegian Lutherns were said to have met in a school building before the Bergen church was built in 1871.

The Yankton Press and Dakotan, in June 17, 1873, contained a news item which stated that the Lincoln post office would be absorbed by the railroad station at Meckling. This did not occur, however. The village of Lincoln did move to the townsite of Meckling but the Lincoln post office was transferred to the home of Hans S. Myron on July 2nd, 1873. Then on May 15, 1883, Lewis A. Larson became the Lincoln postmaster. The Lincoln post office continued to exist until September 21, 1900.
The West Side of Meckling's Main Street, about 1909.

Store on East Side of Main Street

Meckling's Depot and Elevators. Hotel to the far right.
The town of Meckling was founded in 1873 and was named for Jones S. Meckling, a railroad contractor. The little village of Lincoln which C. N. Taylor had established in 1864 was moved to form the nucleus of the town. Meckling was laid out and platted May 14, 1873 by Samuel J. Walton and recorded May 17, 1873 at the Clay County Register of Deeds. The postoffice at Meckling started in the latter part of June and by September 9th, C. N. Taylor had moved his house and barn near the railroad track in the village of Meckling. The long narrow building which lies along the highway and will be torn down when the new highway goes through was the store that C. N. Taylor built. There was also a blacksmith shop and an elevator in early Meckling. By 1866, there was a school. We have not found out about other early businesses or residents of early Meckling except the ones mentioned in the following story by Mr. Martin Piersol, son of early residents of the town; about the disastrous flood of 1881:

"The water came in suddenly, as a gorga had formed south of Vermillion and stopped the flow of the Missouri River. The reason for this was the fact that the winter had been colder than usual and this caused the ice to freeze extra thick; the river was low and when the break-up came in the spring, the ice was so thick and heavy that it could not float out in the usual manner. The chunks of ice piled up from Vermillion's bluffs to the Nebraska hills, backed the water up through Meckling, Gayville and to Yankton and filled the Missouri Valley from bluff to bluff until the water stood ten feet deep in the streets of Meckling. Gayville, being a few miles farther upstream, had a little less water."

"Water came in so fast that there was no chance to escape to higher ground. Rural people came to Meckling; eighty were marooned in the elevator. I think the Taylor and Piersol homes were the only ones with second floors which could house people. The James Hyde family along with others were in the Taylor home. It was on the west side of Main Street and was later moved to make way for the brick house which still stands. The Piersol home stood on the spot on the Groves farm until about a year ago when it was raised. It consisted of three rooms on the second floor and housed 18 people for about that many days of the flood. All they could do was watch the water rise from day to day as it crept up the side of the house to within two inches of the upstairs floor. Included in the 18 people were Mr. and Mrs. John Spatz and sons, Johnny and Eddie; the John Weitzel family, some members of the Nash family and the Piersols and their three sons, Wesley, Roy and Jay. Jay got a dunking by falling down the stairway but John Weitzel went down after him and pulled him out. My father stored seed corn in the house and they made use of it for mush by grinding it in a coffee grinder. A young grove of trees stretched across the west side of town and held a great bank of snow which tamed the current and possibly saved the town from greater disaster."

"Finally one day they noticed that the water was stationary; they were jubilant as they knew some change had taken place, that was when the river dug a new channel around the gorge on the Nebraska side; water was flowing downstream again. In the meantime, the temperature had turned cold and had frozen ice over the flood waters, so that, by being cautious and taking a board along to bridge the weak spots, some of the people made their way from the Piersol house to Taylor's store. Of course those who ventured across the ice landed on the roof of the store, proceeded to cut holes in the roof, and fished out flour and bacon, a great help in sustaining life. It is said that the people stranded in the elevator were each rationed a biscuit a day when finally a large boat called a yawl came down from Yankton and took them to higher ground."

"A room built to the south side of the Piersol house broke partly loose and moved a couple of inches; it sounded like an explosion and for a few moments they thought that was it. Finally, when the waters lowered enough so they dared to try to get out, my folks made a raft out of what boards they could loosen from the house. On this makeshift raft, they started off in a northeasterly direction for the bluffs. They passed mounds of ice on their way to Clay Creek which they reached in late afternoon. High wind, high waves and a swift current on the Creek looked too dangerous for their type of craft. They thought they were trapped but they anchored beside one of these mounds of ice for a few hours. When the wind finally subsided, they made a dash for the other side and landed safely on the Sjure Ellingson farmstead nine miles northwest of Vermillion and enjoyed their first square meal in a good many days. For two months, they lived with a friend they called Doc Watson who lived on what is known as the Christopherson farm a few miles north of Vermillion. Then they went back for the clean-up and a new start. All livestock was lost and they found a foot or more of silt and gumbo on the floor of the house. They all really had to start from scratch again; some people left the country but those who remained got along quite well." (Notes from Martin Piersol about early Meckling).

By 1911, the population of Meckling was 125. It had a Congregational and a Methodist Church and a Lutheran Church was being built. Eves was also postmaster and had a rural telephone line. L. S. Adair was the depot agent, A. S. Hoisington ran the blacksmith shop, Thompson Lumberyard was run by M. L. Brink, and a man by the name of Wolcott was the barber. The bank of Meckling was next to the Johnson and Johnson store and its president was E. E. Halstead with H. G. Taylor as vice president and C. S. Hoekstra as cashier. Mr. Hoekstra was also a notable public and sold insurance. J. W. Anderson was justice of the peace and a contractor. Herman Peterson was also a building contractor. There were two elevators: one owned and managed by H. Westre and the other owned by McCaul—Webster Elevator.
Company and managed by A.M. Stram.

In 1914, Edward Spatz ran a hotel in the building which is now the general store. About 1915 the bank was moved into its new brick building on the west side of the street. South of the bank was a store with a dance hall on the second floor.

In 1921, there were three grain elevators, the third one being a Farmers Elevator Co. Two of these elevators still stand but are not in use. Mr. Westre's elevator was hit by a truck and damaged it so that it had to be torn down. Edward Spatz had a billiard parlor in his hotel by 1921. Mr. Eves was the president of the bank and Steele Bros. and Orr owned one of the elevators. West of the drug store was a blacksmith shop, and an early blacksmith was also the town constable. There probably wasn't a great need for a constable in the little town but once there was a murder on Main Street. A man by the name of Edmundson who lived east of Meckling on the hay ranch, got into an argument with a man who had worked at the ranch, a Mr. Williams. Edmundson walked into the nearby hardware store, picked up a baseball bat from the counter and returned to use it on Mr. Williams. Williams died on the spot.

A small family cemetery stands in the field west of Meckling. Here are buried some members of the C. N. Taylor family and friends of the family. Gordon Edgerton had a garage which burned down in 1922. The people from Meckling and the area went to Gjetles' Park for their celebrations and picnics. There was a bowery dance located there for summer fun. In 1930, the population was 144.

Mrs. Frances Albers became postmistress of Meckling in 1939 and her husband was the rural mail carrier. In 1959 Mrs. Albers converted the front of her house into a postoffice. This is the house which the C. N. Taylors built in 1898. There were approximately 120 residents in Meckling in 1969 with 69 boxholders. Mrs. Albers retired in 1969 and Mrs. Meade is now postmistress in a new little building off Main Street. In addition, there are three business places at Meckling: the Burton Store, Toby's Bar and Restaurant and the Meckling Fertilizer Co. The town is bisected by Highway 50 and when this highway is widened to four lanes, all the homes along the highway will be moved or torn down. Then there will be little left of the once thriving little town. A variety of circumstances probably caused Meckling's decline among them being the depression and closing of the bank, the excessive burden of the high school on the small consolidated district, and the action of rescinding the incorporation of the town so that it could not tax for such things as streets, lights and water system.

Notes from Martin Piersol about early Meckling:

"The first manager of the elevator was a Mr. Bartlett from Vermillion. I recall that his son Norman Bartlett organized and directed the first band to play in Meckling (in the mid 90's). I know that my brother Jay and another pioneer's son, Ole Bottolfson, both played in the band."

"Taylor's Grocery was operated in the late 1890s by David G. West; later the grocery was discontinued and a drug store established in the building. It was operated by Billie Tice and later by Link Eves."

"A second grocery store which was really a department store was established by Henry Westre. Two men, Boyles and Ardery, came to Meckling and built a new store on the east side of Main Street and managed a grocery; it was later sold to Thorson and Piersol, then to the Mikkelson Brothers, then to the Johnson Brothers, and finally to a Mr. Herwitz. This building later burned down."

Arsley Olson had a machine business; he sold binders, cultivators, etc. and his assistant was George Martinson from Gayville. A hardware store was started by Ed Spatz and sold to William Schrader who was one of the early day postmasters. The post office was set up in the hardware store.

A local newspaper called the Meckling Mail was published by a man named West (not the one who bought Taylor's grocery). This Mr. West lived in the hotel and managed it also. This was about 1900. The hotel had been built by William Spowage, located on the corner of Main Street and the highway. Manager of the hotel following West were Bob Brown and a Mr. Bertrand. The bank was organized about 1905 by Henry G. Taylor, son of C. N. Taylor. There was a blacksmith shop managed by Billie Brock and another man named Youngstrom. The Harness Shop was just west of Taylor's store and was owned by Theodore Thorson. The A. R. Piersol family had the meat market and the livery stable. There was a dairy located on the northeast part of town and operated by McLaughlin and Taylor. A creamery was first located in a dwelling house on South Main where the school grounds are now, operated by a Mr. Romine. Later a cooperative creamery was built on the north side of the railroad tracks. Fred Tenight was the butter maker there.

A hay barn was located along the railroad tracks and a good quality wild hay was baled and shipped to eastern points. C. N. Taylor's lumberyard was later owned and operated by Will Beede and E. C. Barton of Vermillion.

Some of the earliest doctors in the community were Drs. Burke, Womeldorf and MacArthur.
West side of Main Street

TOP—The Bagstad & Aaseth Store. Men and boys are standing on the scale.

CENTER—Gayville Hotel, built by Iver Bagstad, operated by Lloyd Castle, Fred Williams, Nels K. Nelson, L.G. Corey, Harold Fiedler and perhaps others. Operated in 1912 by Nels Nelson.

BOTTOM—Gayville Saloon, where the bank is now.
E.V. Cowman's General Store. Cowman's Opera House on the second floor, later operated by Ole J. Olesen

East side of Main Street. Hoopes Furniture and Undertaking. Next to Larson Harness Shop and Shoe Repair

A salesman, Ole J. Olson, and John Larson in front of implement shop
Gayville Vigilantes — organized to stop robberies

Gayville's fire-fighters-with the hose cart bought from the Yankton fire department in 1891.

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Gayville

The townsite of Gayville was located on the east bank of "The Lakes", so called because the winding waterway across the flat land to the Missouri at that time was usually filled with water. The 100 acre townsite was a part of the homestead of Halvor Brynesholm who had been persuaded to sell for $1 to Mr. Wicker and Mr. Elkanah Gay of the Dakota Southern railroad, on December 24 of 1872. The town of Gayville was named for Mr. Gay, a railroad contractor. There had been one store operated by A. B. Willey about where the Glenn Bye residence is now, started the fall of 1872.

The townsite was surveyed in March, 1873 and in a short time 10 buildings were contracted and several built. By the 23rd of April, there were three general mercantile establishments—the Willey store; one started by Iver Bagstad which handled groceries, liquor and cigars; and one moved in from the former stage stop to where the Senior Citizens are now and run by James M. Hatcher. Mr. Hatcher continued to handle the mail and is considered to be Gayville's first postmaster, with the Gayville post office starting on March 14th. There was also a drug store, run by E.C. Walton who was the town justice of the peace and was nicknamed "Marryin' Sam". Gayville had a blacksmith shop run by Mr. Johnson and some grain warehouses. On April 23rd, Gayville's first blessed event occurred—the birth of Gay Keith, 9½ pounds, born to Mr. and Mrs. William Keith.

On June 1st, Gayville's charter was filed at the county court house. The first house, built by Mr. Hatcher, in 1873 is still in Gayville, although in a different location, and is occupied by the W.S. Fosters. In July, a permanent depot was built by Colonel Meckling and several homes were built during the fall of 1873 and the spring of 1874.

A Mr. Collamer who had been mayor of Yankton erected a building in Gayville in October of 1873 intending to go into the tin and hardware business. In December he opened a real estate office in partnership with a man named Truesdell. In the November 23rd issue of a Yankton paper, "The Gayville House" a large and first class hotel run by Iver Bagstad on the temperance plan, was mentioned. The present building, which was a hotel until the 1950's, was built by Iver Bagstad in 1879, so "The Gayville House" must have preceded it. Edward Anderson, a blacksmith, is also mentioned in this newspaper story so there were probably two blacksmiths. George Winters was one of the carpenters who hammered this little town into existence.

In the summer of 1874, two young men in silk hats arrived at the depot—F.B. Hardin and his cousin. Hardin took a job as Gayville's first school teacher but his cousin said that this country was good for nothing but Indians and grasshoppers and he returned on the next train to Ohio. Another Hardin, who had come and stayed, James E. Hardin, was the first depot agent and was also the town marshal. The family still has the official paper giving Marshal Hardin the authority to go to Minnesota to arrest someone for grand larceny.

In August of 1874, the store of James M. Hatcher burned to the ground. It was believed to be the work of an incendiary. Mr. Hatcher's loss was $2200 or $2500 but his property was insured for $1700. Mr. Hatcher stated that he intended to rebuild but he did not and J. L. Foskett, who had started a store on the other side of the street dealing in clothing, boots, shoes and groceries, became the next postmaster.

Mr. Hatcher sold his house to Louis Sampson, who had come with his mother and brother with the very early settlers of 1860. Mr. Sampson was married in his new house and started an agricultural store and grain business. This house is still in Gayville on the corner of Iverson and Washington and is occupied by the Fosters. Mr. H.C. Young was a grain buyer, also, and in addition ran a lumber and coal yard. A claim shanty about 14 x 18 was moved in. Mr. Hardin opened school on November 26th, after building benches for the children himself. A 22 x 30 foot building was put up before the next school year.

A Methodist minister, Rev. James W. Spangler, alternated preaching every other Sunday at Gayville and Meckling and there was talk of building a Union Church building.

By 1880, Gayville had a population of 130. The great flood of 1881 was an historical event for Gayville, as well as the areas around. It was on relatively high ground so that the water did not rise so high in the buildings but the whole town was flooded and people scrambled to every available place of safety. The hotel and homes which had a second floor were havens to those who came. Mr. Julius Berkeley lived in the hotel and was chief cook for the many who were housed there. Regina Mortenson's father, Mr. Olson, kept busy building a boat in Mr. Willey's store. Rescue boats came from Yankton and rowed right into the homes and took the occupants to the bluffs to stay with friends.

Iver Bagstad took in his brother-in-law, John O. Aaseth, as a partner and enlarged his business to sell everything from dry goods to livestock. Below is a day's business activities from the Bagstad-Aaseth store of 1883 copied from a ledger found in the basement several years ago:

M.D. Moore
By hired boy .50
For pr. shoes, 2 meals 1.85
N.H. Hills
To 87 lb. butter 7.85
Elmer Berg
For one box axle grease .10
M.S. Cowman
For flour 3.25, candy .10 3.35
N.M. Hills
For rope .45
R. Holcomb
Fly nets 1.60
Ed Anderson
Fausett .20
H.A. Burke
For prunes .50

The post office, after being run by Mr. Hatcher, Mr. Foskett and Mr. Gay was moved into the Bagstad-Aaseeth store. Mr. Aaseth served as postmaster for a time and then the job was turned over to John Magorian and later to Mrs. Hanifan, who had lost her husband and had a family to support. Later Mr. Aaseth was postmaster again.

Gayville started a municipal band in 1890 conducted by the Milwaukee depot agent until 1894. Band members were Charles and Sam Anderson, Arthur and Ed Cowman, Mose and George McElwain, Andrew Burtiness, Loyal Hills and Anton Dahl. The band was still going in 1900 with a Mr. Woodside as conductor. New members were John and B.V. Lossemore, Harry and Mark Shepherdson, Connie Hannefin, Tommy Inch and W. Stevens.

In 1891, Gayville purchased a hand drawn hose cart from the Yankton fire department, when Yankton progressed to a fire wagon with horses. It carried 600 ft. of hose, brass bowled flares which burned kerosene, some small tin bells and an attached wooden tool box. Both the Lutheran and Methodist Churches were built in 1891, also.

Ed Cowman started a harness shop and later a bicycle shop, next to the furniture store which stood where the cafe now stands. The harness shop was later run by Matt Larson. The furniture store was run by S.C. Hoopes, who was also the town’s undertaker. In 1898, Mr. Cowman and Tillie Welby were married. They moved a building from where the Legion Hall stands to main street, across the street from the furniture store and started a general store in 1900.

The Farmer’s Elevator was established in 1899 with Charles Shepherdson as president; E.E. Warfield as secretary, John O. Aaseth, treasurer and H.F. Shepherdson as manager.

A contract was let for a woodman lodge building in January of 1900 and by February 1st, the 28’ x 70’ building was going up rapidly. There were 48 members of the lodge.

The Gayville saloon, run by Bert Ely and Louis Langfeld located where the bank now stands had installed a set of fixtures worth about $500.

Mr. Wm. McMaster had come to Gayville from near Sioux City, Iowa, to start a bank. It started in 1901 in a small frame building west of the saloon. That same year, Gayville was incorporated and elected its first trustees: Jim Harden, Hans Myron and Jack McKay. Mark Shepherdson was clerk, M.S. Shepherdson, justice of the peace, J.O. Aaseth, treasurer, Sturk Lee, Marshal, Sam Anderson, street commissioner and Ole Odland, assessor. The meetings were held in the Farmers Elevator.

In 1904, Gayville had its first newspaper with a Mr. Granger as the first editor. Later editors included a Mr. Cooley, J.F. Gorkim, (1919), E.S. Dietrick and J.H. Hutchinson, 1927-30. The style of writing varied with the various editors but was more personalized than is usually seen now. An example is this news item about an accident case:

“Undertaker S.C. Hoopes is getting many deserved compliments on his services in preparing the remains of the victim for burial. Those who saw the remains in a frightfully mangled form and afterwards saw them as prepared for burial, could hardly believe their own eyes. They never thought such a piece of work could be performed by any undertaker. Mr. Hoopes deserves both praise and appreciation for the splendid services rendered in this case.”

In 1905, a Mr. Cooley edited a booklet describing the businesses of Gayville:

The Lloyd Hotel was being run by a Mrs. Castle and her son, Lloyd; Sturk and Pete Lee operated a livery barn with dray service and real estate business; George Mortensen operated the Gayville Drug Store with Albert Bengston in charge of prescriptions, and with an up-to-date soda fountain: L.J. Revheim was the proprietor of the city meat market; Wm. McMaster, cashier of the Security State Bank; Mr. Granger, editor of the Gayville Observer; O.P. Olson, proprietor of the harness shop: Ole Odland, the Implement shop; Sam Anderson, the village blacksmith; Tony Ryken, barber; Bert Wright, depot agent and two doctors, Dr. Bylenhammer and Dr. Burke; and a new elevator, the McCaul-Webster, part of a chain with headquarters in Minneapolis and under the management of N.J. Lund, a native of Clay County. The Bagstad and Aaseeth Company had divided their store into several different departments: drugs and medicines; dry goods and clothing; groceries, provisions and crockeries; and hardware, stoves and cutlery. The entire enterprise was carried on under the management of Iver Bagstad, president; John O. Aaseth, treasurer; G.B. Wright, vice president; and H.L. Hanson, secretary. In addition to their general merchandise business, they handled lumber, other building material, coal, wood and livestock.

In 1908, The Gayville Observer reported that about a mile of cement walks had been put down through the summer. In 1915, Ed Cowman was appointed postmaster. In 1916, Ed died and his wife, Tillie, was appointed in his place. Mrs. Cowman often took chickens which had come by parcel post to her home to keep them warm until they could be delivered. The post office was robbed several times during the years that she was post mistress.

From the 1919 Gayjuan, we learn that Fred Williams was now running the Lloyd Hotel, L.Z. Reed was managing a Co-op grocery store. Albert Melville was manager of the Gayville Elevator Co., Lars Olson was running the lumber yard and E.M. Christensen, the city Meat Market. Ole J. Oleson was selling Chalmers, Oldsmobile and Maxwell automobiles, as well as Emerson and Waterloo tractors and other farm implements.

By 1922, Ole J. Oleson was out of the implement business and operating the Gayville Opera House, showing only the best and most entertaining in educational pictures. A.J. Ryken was operator of a billiard parlor and J.O. Cowman was selling Chandler and Chevrolet cars. L.N. Aaseth was then
cashier of the bank and T.B. Wetteland, assistant cashier. There was a millinery shop in the old building back of the cafe. In 1924, Sherman Collett started the first truck line with one Ford truck. He later added 2 additional trucks to take care of the dry line and the ice business, putting up ice from the Missouri and James Rivers. He also hauled coal, livestock and other commodities. Assistant drivers were Raymond Lee and William Remington.

A story in the Observer tells about Gayville’s experience with bandits: The Bagstad and Aaseth store had been broken into several times, so Loyal and Paul Hanson, proprietors of the store at that time decided to sleep in the store and guard it. They were awakened by a noise at the rear basement entrance and found someone cutting into the door. Loyal fired his shotgun toward the door. They heard nothing more that night but in the morning, when they were going home to breakfast, they found a man’s body, face down in the road. Sioux City police identified the slain bandit as Le DeLear, a notorious police character who had served two prison terms.

After the last incident the citizens of Gayville became so alarmed at the repeated robbery attempts that they formed a vigilante group provided with arms and ammunition. They also installed a system of burglar alarms.

Gayville suffered the same problems as other small towns during the depression, drought and dust storms and grasshoppers of the thirties. The small town businesses were so directly dependent on the farmer, that when farm income was cut, many of them folded and the towns grew smaller.

The fact that Gayville’s bank was able to re-open its doors probably kept it from becoming a ghost town in the 30’s. The 1940’s and World War II brought prosperity for a time, but the automobile and good roads drew people to larger towns for their shopping and recreation.

Gayville in the last two decades has become a residential town with many driving to nearby larger towns to work and others living in retirement on their savings and social security.

The United National Bank, Gayville Branch-Marvin Schoon, Executive Vice-president; the general store, recently sold by Jim Orton to Walt Hubers; a newly decorated cafe operated by the Schelskis; a bar and liquor store and a welding shop operated by the Don Kaufmans; Olson’s Body Shop, operated by John and Keith Olson; Jerry’s Auto Repair Shop, operated by Jerry Weebeen; a service station run by the Lavern Jepsens; a gasoline delivery service operated by Eugene Olson and the Gayville Grain and Milling elevator managed by Merle Ludwig and the town barber Mr. Lukes. Mr. Craig has a shoe repair shop. R. Gene Garvey is the postmaster. He was appointed to fill the position when Mrs. Tillie Cowman retired in 1946.

In 1965, 1000 feet of new sidewalk was poured on the main street of Gayville with volunteers from both the town and rural area.

In 1966, construction work started on the water and sewer project for the town of Gayville. The total cost was to be $151,000 with $88,000 repaid to the government by residents of Gayville and the remaining funds provided by grants from the U.S. Farmer’s Home Administration and the Water Pollution Control Board. Senator McGovern came to the ground breaking ceremony and his speech concluded with “I congratulate you, Mayor Jensen, and all of the people of Gayville and thank you for this opportunity to see how programs for rural progress can be brought to life — how a community such as Gayville can move up in the ranks of new ‘Communities of Tomorrow’ in rural America.” This has been a big factor in encouraging home building in Gayville.

In 1971, a drive was carried out by the Vern Hedelson’s, relative new comers to Gayville, for street signs. Mr. Hedelson installed the neat signs on the REA posts with REA approval, at each intersection. They also helped get house numbers for those who wished them. Both street names and house numbers dress up the town and help in locating homes.

Fullerville

This little junction was a landmark between Yankton and Gayville and Mission Hill, established in 1904. Fullerville, commercially centered with a general store and a grain elevator, was a cattle shipping point. C.L. West, founder of the village, and his neighbors, raising cattle and hogs, had to drive them to Gayville or Yankton for shipping, so West asked the Milwaukee Railroad for side tracks and stockyards at that point for the convenience of the farmer. The railroad complied and after that other businesses sprang up including the general store, the grain elevator and a blacksmith shop.

The place was initially called Jerico, until a man named Fuller moved into the community to farm, just across the road and it was decided to change the name to Fullerville. When Harry West was married, his father built a house for Harry and his bride at Fullerville and Harry helped in the elevator business. In 1915, when Clark West passed away, Harry operated the grain business for the following 28 years and then moved to Mission Hill. The elevator at Fullerville, with 15,000 bushel capacity, was built for $4,397.40. Other men who operated the elevator included Ed Larkin, Jesse West and Al Melville. Days of mechanized farming began the decline of Fullerville. Little by little, business dropped off and then the blacksmith shop burned down. In 1941, only the elevator remained and it was soon torn down. Now all that remains to mark the site is a grove of cottonwood trees on the NW¼ of section 6, Gayville Township.
Old Vangen, oldest church in the Dakotas — 1869

Old Bergen Church — 1871

Gayville Methodist Church — 1891

New Bergen Church — 1909

Trinity Lutheran, South of Gayville, 1893

Left—Trinity Lutheran, interior
Left—Meckling Lutheran Church, 1912

Left, below — Meckling Congregational, early

Below—Meckling Congregational, later Assembly of God.

Gayville Lutheran Church, dedicated in March, 1972.

58
Churches

Vangen Lutheran Church

The coming of Norwegian immigrants to Dakota Territory began in 1859. In 1861, Pastor Abraham Jacobson of the Augustana Synod spent some time in the area holding services in the homes of the settlers and performing ministerial duties. After the departure of Pastor Jacobson, there were no regular preaching services although prayer meetings were held. A request was made to the church council of the Norwegian Synod that a pastor be sent to visit these pioneer settlers at least two times a year. In October 1864, Rev. J. Krohn came to hold services. During his stay, he baptized 45 children. While Pastor Krohn was here, the “Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Dakota Territory” was formed with 67 voting members. The first trustees elected were Helge Mathiasson, Aslak Iverson, Ole Sampson, Peter Nilson and Lars Fagnestol (Olson). Hans Gunderson was elected Deacon. This organization took in all Norwegian Lutherans in Union, Clay and Yankton Counties. In 1867, Rev. Emil Christensen accepted a call and became a resident pastor, living on his 40 acre tract near Lincoln, with his wife, Amalia. The congregation was soon divided into three districts: Brule Creek, to the east; Bergen in the center, and Vangen toward the west. Pastor Christensen served the Bergen-Vangen area for nine years, until 1876. The Brule Creek area had called their own pastor. It was during Pastor Christensen’s service that the first Vangen Church was erected on a piece of land donated by Guro Levorson in section 30 of Volin Township: Much of the building material was hauled from Sioux City by ox team. This church still stands. Relics of the old church still intact and being preserved include a hand-carved communion spade and the old baptismal font. The old church stands as a monument to the early Scandinavian pioneers. With the land for the church, the Levorsons donated two acres for burial purposes. In 1918, the Vangen Congregation started to attend services in a new church in Mission Hill, and changed from the Norwegian language to English for teaching confirmations.

Bergen Lutheran Church

After holding services for three and a half years in a log school in Norway Township, the Bergen Congregation took a subscription in cash and labor and in 1870, on land given by Mr. and Mrs. Hans Myron, the Bergen Church was built. It was built under the supervision of Aslak Iverson assisted by Ole Bottolfson, R. Brunick and Lars Anderson. The building was 40 x 50 feet and 18 ft. high. The first service was held July 19, 1871, at which time confirmation was also held. Inside of the church was not finished until 1880, the bell tower and a bell installed in 1891 and the church was dedicated in 1883.

The Bergen Ladies Aid was organized March 28, 1883 by Pastor Dahl with Mrs. Thomas Thompson as its first president. From early times, the early pioneers were laid to rest in the Lutheran Cemetery two miles north of the Bergen Church. But in 1894, L.A. Iverson and J.G. Iverson each donated a half acre of land directly east of the church yard. This cemetery was called “Evergreen” because of the many native cedar trees they planted there.

Gayville Lutheran Church

The Gayville Lutheran Ladies Aid was organized June 12, 1883 by Reverend Dahl with 19 charter members: Mrs. Tore Johanson, Mrs. Anton Larson, Mrs. Brita Lee, Mrs. Eline Bagstad, Mrs. Ragnille Alsager, Mrs. Martha Severson, Mrs. Ole Andres Nilson, Mrs. Anna Sampson, Mrs. Anna Lee, Mrs. Evon Segard, Mrs. Marie Braaten, Mrs. Nels Olaus Erickson, Mrs. Louise Dahl, Mrs. Marit Halseth, Mrs. Peter Steffenson, Mrs. Anna Johnson, Mrs. Christian Bratholt, Mrs. Synneva Anderson, Mrs. Mathias Bourne. Meetings were held at the member’s homes and they often walked to meetings.

On September 6, 1891, on a plot of land given by John and Christine Aaest, the cornerstone of the Gayville Lutheran Church was laid. Work was started at once with Martin and Anton Dahl, contractors. Members of the Ladies Aid purchased the church bell, and the building was heated by a large wood stove with kerosene lamps providing light when needed. In 1905, two acres of land were purchased from Holger Anderson for the Gayville Cemetery, for $160 dollars. In March 1906, Holger Anderson was buried there and his wife died in 1907 and was buried beside her husband. In 1971, this church was torn down and replaced by a modern brick building which was dedicated in March 1972.

Meckling Lutheran Church

Due to a language barrier and to bad roads, part of the Bergen congregation organized into a separate congregation on the 7th day of November, 1912, calling themselves the Meckling Evangelical Lutheran Church. The elected trustees were Henry Odland, Nels Larson and Herman Peterson. On January 1911, plans for a church building were accepted and the contract was awarded to Peter Mortenson. On October 10, 1914, the cornerstone was laid and the church was dedicated. The first wedding in the church was on September 25th, 1912—Louis and Ida Ahrendt. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Larson were the second couple to be married in the church—on September 22, 1914.

The Meckling Lutheran Ladies Aid was organized October 6, 1911, in the home of Mrs. Sam Johnson. Charter members were Mrs. Sam Johnson, Mrs. Bertha Bottolfson, Mrs. Herman Peterson, Mrs.
Rasmus Johnson, Mrs. Bart Mikelson, Mrs. L.F. Kaeberle, Mrs. Henry Odland, Mrs. Fred Demann, Mrs. Nels Larson, Mrs. Christ Larson, Mrs. Ludvig Ahrendt, Mrs. Henry Taylor, Mrs. C.S. Hoekstra and Mrs. L.A. Mikelson. Mrs. Herman Peterson was elected the first president. The Meckling Cemetery, dating back to early pioneer days, is located in section 34 of Meckling Township.

**English Protestant Church**

*(name not known)*

From a letter from F.P. Hardin, the first teacher in Gayville, we have the mention of another rural church: “I think the first English Protestant Church outside of Yankton, in Yankton County was built about four and a half miles south of Gayville and about one mile west of Gayville on the north side of the slough. Eli Withrow got the logs out and hewed them. I carried up the northwest corner of it when it was put up. The seats were made with legs and no backs. We used to have Sunday School at White Hall school house in the forenoon and services in the church in the afternoon. I was chorister for both. Our musical instrument was a tuning fork.” This church was destroyed by the flood and never rebuilt.

**Meckling Methodist Church**

The Methodist Church was established early in the history of the town of Meckling. Reverend Tanner and Reverend Eberhart are names of early pastors in the Methodist Church. Reverend Eberhart lived in Gayville. The Methodist and Congregational Churches merged about 1916 and the Methodist Church building was remodelled into a home.

**Meckling Congregational Church**

The Congregational Church was a very early church in Meckling, also. The building, the sod shell of which stands south of Toby’s Bar, was the second building which this congregation built about 1909. Reverend Crayter, Reverend Robbins, Reverend Miller and Reverend Steele were ministers in the Congregational Church. The combined Congregational and Methodist Churches held services in the Congregational church for a time but by about 1927 they had closed their doors.

The Methodist and Congregational churches were established early in the history of the town. Reverend Tanner and Reverend Eberhart are names of early pastors in the Methodist Church; the Reverend Eberhart lived in Gayville. Reverend Crayter and Reverend Robbins were early day ministers in the Congregational Church. Martin J. Lewis from the very early organized Baptist Church in Vermillion came to Meckling in 1892 to organize a congregation and conduct services and Sunday School classes. Reverend Cross and Reverend Keister held Evangelistic meetings (called “Camp Meetings”) held in the summertime in tents. One was on the Dole place north of Meckling.

**Baptist Church**

Martin J. Lewis, from the very early organized Baptist Church in Vermillion, came to Meckling in 1892 to organize a congregation and conduct services and Sunday School classes. Evidently he didn’t succeed in getting a congregation established.

**Assembly of God Church**

The Reverends Cross and Keister conducted evangelistic meetings in the summertime in tents and later a congregation was formed and they built a small church. When the United Church closed its doors, the Assembly of God Church took over its building and conducted services and Sunday School classes there until about 1959.
Trinity Lutheran Church

Trinity Skandinavan Evangelical Lutheran Congregation was organized on the 12th of September, 1880, by 55 souls, which soon rose to 70 by transfers of several early pioneer Danish families from Bergen, a Norwegian Lutheran Church. On December 28, 1881, a meeting of the congregation was held to select a plot for a cemetery. They accepted the offer of an acre of Jacobus Lassen's farm, free of charge, and fenced it with oak posts and fir boards.

At first, services were held in the homes, but in January 1893, they decided to build a church in the center of the cemetery. The first pastor to serve with occasional services with Reverend Gudmund Grill from Iowa. The first child baptized in the church was Anton Lund, son of Jorgen Lund. The first confirmants were Cora Lund and Peter Johnson. Several months later, the church was destroyed by a windstorm. It was unanimously decided to build and the men started to salvage material from the first church. The children were put to work straightening nails and the women served meals to the workers.

The first wedding from Trinity was that of Helene Johnson and Ivar Hansen in 1900. The first burial from the church was Metha Mortensen in June 1896. Amelia Andre was the first confirmand.

In 1940, the congregation bought an acre of land from Soren Sorensen, across the road from the cemetery, dug a basement and moved the church across the road, made a 12 foot addition and wired electricity. The Reverend Harris Jespersen was pastor at that time.

Trinity has never had a resident pastor, but depended on the visits of Danish pastors from the United Danish Synod at first, from the Vangengayville parish for a time. Since then, Trinity has shared the services of a pastor with Our Savior's Lutheran of Viborg.

In 1893, the year the first church was built, Trinity Ladies Aid was organized with charter members Mrs. Calle Johnson, Mrs. Peter Smith, Mrs. Hans Smith, Mrs. Peter Lund, Mrs. Henning Hanson and Mrs. Jens Junker. Their first bazaar was held in the Jens Junker home in 1907 and for many years an ice cream social was held in the summer.
Schools
Gayville School

Gayville School, 1892-1914

Eighth grade graduating class—1901

Gayville School, 1925
Pioneer Educators

Mr. F. P. Hardin

N. M. Hills

Gayville's Winningest Team — Sixth District Champions, 1920-21
Gayville Independent School

The first school was taught in the Wadsworth home for a short time by a Mr. Sunde in 1873. But Mr. F. P. Hardin who was hired by the members of the Gayville School Board (Ole Sampson, Grandfather Christenson and Peter Anderson) to teach the first three month term of school was considered the first teacher. School was set to open November 26th and his wages were to be $40 a month, but that depended upon the ability of the board to collect the taxes.

Gayville’s first school building was a claim shanty about 14 by 18 feet, built of cottonwood lumber and finished inside with brown building paper. It was furnished with a small table, a chair and a blackboard. For texts, he used some song books and dictionaries that he had brought with him from Ohio. He also had brought a set of maps, a globe and some cubical blocks. He was given some tools and lumber and he made benches for the children himself. He decorated the drab walls with a bright “Welcome” cut from colored cardboard and a motto, “Learn something every day.” As the children started to enroll, he found he didn’t have enough benches and for a time, he spent his noon hours making additional benches.

Mr. Hardin’s register listed the following pupils: Joseph Daily, age 4; William Walton and Augusta Iverson, age 5; Adda Daily and Alous Peterson, age 6; Anna Young and Louis Olson, age 7; Ole Christenson, Edwin Lewison, Mavia Daily, Sarah Walton and Jorgina Johnson, age 8; Sterki Sterickson, age 9; Atena Olson, Sidina Iverson, Kelliis Olson, Maggie Sterickson, Hans Pederson, William Schulsea, Hannah Olson and Samuel Anderson, age 11; Frank Warfield, age 12; Mary Schulsea, Fairman Wilson and John Christenson, age 13; Anna Anderson, age 14; Mary Jackson, Christian Blakly, DELL Vinton, and Peter Olson, age 16; Engbert Anderson, William Hardin and Andrew Olson, age 17; Newton Blodgett, age 19; and Ole Mikkelson, age 22. Two students, Petra Peterson and Eddie Christenson had no age listed. Mr. Hardin said that they had a fine closing program and that he would never forget the cooperation of the parents and the earnest work of the pupils. In 1875, the school was moved to a new home, later known as the Langfield house. The teacher was Mrs. E. C. Walton, wife of the town druggist. From 1878 to 1886, Mr. N. M. Hills, a brother-in-law of Mr. Hardin’s, taught the school and is considered one of Gayville’s pioneer educators. During that time, the school was enlarged. In 1892, a new frame building was built at the cost of $2075, on the lot southeast of the present school. They had an enrollment of 49 with two teachers. In 1896, they added the ninth grade, but there was some objection and for the next five years, they offered just eight grades. In 1901, they held elaborate graduation exercises for the eight 8th grade graduates, on May 3 at the Opera House above Cowman’s Store. Their motto was “We learn not for school, but for life.” There was music by the Walden orchestra, a processional by Miss Barnhart, a blind music teacher, and declamations and essays by the graduates: Room Higher Up by Virn Conklin; Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address by Leon Johnson; Class History by Alice Dahl; Benefits of the Printing Press and the Steam Engine by Julian Aaseth; The Progress of Humanity by Ella Myron; The Life of Grant by Lincoln Buckman; Results of Work by Matilda Larson; Does Poverty or Riches Develop the Best Character?, by Katherine Blodgett.

In 1901, it was decided to add the 9th grade again. The school term lasted 8 months. In 1905, Gayville had one graduate, Sena Lund, but it wasn’t until 1908 that they graduated their first twelve year students—Alma Aaseth, Artincie Blodgett, Maude Hoopes and Mable Odland. Gayville in 1908 had 5 teachers with wages of $80 for male teachers and $50 for women. It had 24 high school students and 108 elementary students and ran for nine months.

In 1914, the increased enrollment and the added curriculum required a larger school, so the present brick structure was built at a cost of approximately $15,000. By 1920-1921, Superintendent E. L. Bersagel and his faculty had managed to get the high school on the accredited schools. This year also produced the most successful basketball team ever. They won the sixth district tournament and went to the state tournament. The team, coached by Superintendent Bersagel, consisted of Melvin Pederson, Clifford Hill, Melvin Diltz, Ernest Olson, and Elling Byrkland. They had no gymnasium at that time so they had to practice on an outdoor court and later at the Volin town hall. They won 22 of 25 games:

Gayville 44—Wakonda 6
Gayville 26—Irene 11
Gayville 118—Scotland 8
Gayville 15—Yankton 14
Gayville 32—Hurley 8
Gayville 13—University H.S. 0
Gayville 23—Hurley 7
Gayville 14—Centerville 13
Gayville 32—Viborg 7
Gayville 7—Canton 1
Gayville 32—Canton Normal 14
Gayville 46—Viborg 16
Gayville 20—Centerville 12
Gayville 23—Elk Point 2
Gayville 39—Wakonda 12
Gayville 24—Scotland 10
Gayville 14—Yankton 19
Gayville 34—Hurley 14
Gayville 17—Centerville 11
Gayville 6—Yankton 5
Gayville 11—Yankton 14
Gayville 24—Wakonda 8

On March 17 they played Rapid City and won the game 27 to 12. In the semi-finals, they lost 25 to 14 to Mitchell.

In 1922 the staff had grown to 8 teachers for the 50 high school students and the 89 elementary pupils. Male teachers were being paid $198 a month and
women, $133. In 1925, the north wing was added to provide a gymnasium and a stage.

The Gayville school has sponsored at various times a tri-county basketball tournament, a tri-school play contest and a song festival by the combined choral groups of Gayville, Volin and Meckling. According to the school records, Gayville High School had its highest enrollment in the years of 1945-1946 and 1946-1947 with identical enrollments of 79 students. It may have been higher in the 1930-36 period but the records seem to be missing. The combined elementary and high school enrollment was greatest in 1967-1968. This was no doubt due to the inclusion of some of the rural schools which brought the elementary enrollment up making a total enrollment of 157.

In 1969, the combined Gayville-Volin independent district No. 82 began to operate, with elementary grades in Volin and junior and senior high in Gayville. The enrollment increased to 228 students and the teaching staff to fifteen. In addition to the staff, the school hired two custodians, three bus drivers, two cooks and a secretary.

In 1972, the teaching staff numbers 22 plus superintendent.
Meckling School

Meckling's yellow brick school built in 1897, with the second story added later.

Meckling's present school — built in 1920, closed 1972

Mrs. Bessie Dunbar, who cooked at the Meckling School for 30 years

One of Meckling's School buses — 1965
Since the first teachers were not required to make reports, we are not sure what year the Meckling school started, but since the original district number of Meckling School was No. 4, Meckling school must have been one of the very early schools. A news item in a Vermillion paper mentioned the closing of the school term at Meckling June, 1876. They were evidently having school on a regular basis at that time. The first building was a small wooden one probably very similar to the one room rural schools at that time. One of the early teachers was a Miss Cora Hayes who was paid $32 a month in 1884 to teach 33 students. The next year John Perry, a nephew of Charles N. Taylor, taught for $25 a month with an average enrollment of 22. The great fluctuation in enrollment was caused by settlers moving in and out, due to the discouraging years of drought, grasshoppers and floods.

In 1889, Meckling built a new wood frame building 30 feet by 40 feet, with two cloakrooms. The enrollment had risen to 40 pupils. The first school census available, in 1896, listed the following board members: William Elliot, chairman; Ole Olson, Jr., clerk; and William Shrader, treasurer. It was decided that a two room school was necessary and in 1897, a new light yellow brick building sixty by sixty feet was built and two teachers were hired. Later an upper story was added to provide four rooms.

On May 27, 1919, the districts of Meckling No. 4 and Harmony No. 13 voted 72 to 7 to consolidate. The new district, Meckling No. 2, voted to build a new school building to provide rooms for a high school. The new building was started in March, 1920. In April, the yellow brick building burned to the ground and classes had to be conducted in church basements for the remainder of the year. The new building was finished in time for use that September. S.G. Myron was chairman of the new consolidated school board at that time, with T.E. Hollingsworth, H. Odland, H. Peterson and C. Larson on the five man board plus L.A. Mickelson, clerk and M.L. Brink, treasurer. In 1922, a high school class of 3 graduated. Peak enrollment for the twelve year school was in 1932-1933 when there were 180 children.

Meckling's best remembered educator was C.T. Yestness, who was superintendent from 1937 until 1944. In 1965, the patrons voted to close the 44 pupil high school and the last class graduated in May, 1965. High school students the next year went to the school of their choice on a tuition basis. The Meckling district became a part of the Vermillion School District in 1967 and elementary classes have been held there until 1972, when the patrons voted to close the school and send all the children to Vermillion.
The old Howard School No. 30

Howard School, closed in 1967

Lincoln School No. 12, closed in 1970

Old Lincoln No. 12 being moved to Marinus Anderson farm to be remodelled into a house.

Whitehall School No. 78, closed in 1967

Whitehall interior
The Rural Schools

In pioneer days, wherever a settlement started, there was soon action to start churches and schools. The settlement of Lincoln, established in 1864 by C.N. Taylor, may have had the first rural school on the bottom. There was some mention of a public school there in 1865. County superintendent's reports for 1866 listed five schools in Clay County and two schools in Yankton County. We know that the town of Vermillion had the first school, but Norway No. 3 and Meckling No. 4 were probably among the earliest in Clay County and Union No. 5 and Dewey No. 6, in Yankton County. Organization of school districts began in 1866. Textbooks used at that time were McGuffy's Readers, Spellers and Primary Charts; Harvey's Elementary Grammar; Quackenboss's Arithmetic and History of the United States; and Cornell's Geographies. By 1871, there were six schools in Clay County and five in Yankton County. By 1885, when teacher's reports were first required, Norway No. 3 and Lincoln No. 12 (called Western in the first report) responded. The Norway school report indicated 98 days taught, with a daily attendance of 24. Pupils came from the Gunderson, Larson, Thompson, Myron, Wold, Hansen, Colbenson, Bottolfson, Johnson, Iverson and Welch families. At that time the school house was located on the NE¼ of section 14, east of the Amund Hanson home. It was later moved to the western edge of that section, possibly when the new school was built. Norway school closed in 1970 and the children now ride a bus to Vermillion to school.

The 1884-1885 teacher's report for district No. 12, Lincoln School, listed 33 children from the following families: Myrons, Ericksons, Odlands, Seversons, Junkers, Hansons, Brunicks, Westines, Larsons, Thomsens, Olsons and Lunds. The school at that time was located on the North ¼ of section 8 near the center line. It was later moved to the south side of that section. Lincoln closed in 1970 and children from that district go to Vermillion or Wakonda.

Harmony No. 13 reported first in 1889. Harmony was located on the NW ¼ of section 28 of Meckling Township. Families represented were the Petersons, Larsons, Halvorsons, Halverts, Herricks, Myrons and Bergs. The chair of the school board was M. Odland and the clerk was Herman Peterson. Harmony No. 13 closed in 1919 when it voted to become a part of Meckling Consolidated District No. 2.

There were five rural schools in Gayville Township and one in Volin Township on the bottomland.

Union No. 5 was at first called the "Bend" school and the first reports were for the 1888-1889 school year. At that time, W. Loosman was chair of the school board, L. Van Allen, clerk, and G. W. Mines of St. Helena, Nebraska, treasurer. The teacher was hired for a 6 month term at $25 per month and there were 20 pupils. In 1923, the Bend School burned. A new school was built a half mile east in section 36. High school students had been attending Gayville since a high school began there. In 1945, this school closed and the children went to Gayville to start their first year of school. The district became a part of the Gayville district, in 1967. Dewey No. 6 first reported in 1895 and their school board consisted of Thomas Garvey, chairman, Frank Collins and N.H. Walker. Their school was first located on the south edge of section 16, but was later moved a mile east. They later added an extra room and had a two teacher school. They even offered a high school course and graduated several students. A small teacherage was built on the grounds so that the teacher could live near the school. Dewey closed its doors in 1946 and the elementary children started to ride the bus with their older brothers and sisters. Dewey became a part of the Gayville district in 1967.

Berkeley No. 7 sent in its first report in the spring of 1898. The board consisted of W.L. Van Osdel, chairman; Christian Freng and Christian Olson. It was located on the southeast corner of section 28, Volin Township. Berkeley closed its doors in 1945. Part of the children went to Gayville and some of them went to Volin. In 1969, when the Gayville-Volin School District began to function, the children of that area were attending school together again.

Whitehall No. 17 or joint district No. 78 was located on the county line in section 25, and the district extended into both counties. The first report was sent in 1897 and listed C.M. Johnson as chairman of the school board, William Andre as clerk and W.E. Warfield, treasurer. Whitehall closed in 1967 and most of its students went to Gayville. Patrons of a small portion of that district voted to be a part of the Vermillion district.

Howard No. 30 was originally a little log school located in section 6 of Gayville township. It was replaced by a small traditional one-room school. The first reports are for 1907 but it was in session years earlier. A.L. Van Osdel was chair of the board, Clark West, clerk and M. Howard, treasurer. Later a new school was located near the James River bridge. Howard No. 30 school was closed in 1967 when the rural schools were phased out and part of the district went into the Yankton district and part of it into the Gayville district. The school building is the only one in Gayville Township which remains on the grounds. It has been converted into a private home.

Inch No. 49 school was located in the southwest corner of section 4, Gayville township, about 3½ miles west of Gayville. It was in session by 1878 but we do not know how much before that. The Inch school closed in 1966. In 1967, it became part of the Gayville district.

Many of these schools, as has been mentioned, were in session years before the first census report and the first teacher's reports. Reports were probably
not required in the early years. Those who attended these schools have fond memories of the little one room school, with its coal stove, the pump organ, lunches carried in a syrup pail, and water carried from a nearby well. They remember the opening exercises begun by repeating the pledge to the flag. Then everyone, down to the tiniest first grader, knew that it was his responsibility to study his lesson and be prepared for the 8 to 10 minutes which the teacher would allow for each class. Later schools installed furnaces, electric lights, wells and some even had telephones and indoor plumbing. Below is part of a poem, written by Mrs. Lyle McDaniels of Bryant, S.Dak. and published in Pasque Petals which tells how some of us feel about it.

I went to an auction sale today
And it made my heart feel sad;
To see all those precious treasures sold
That this little old schoolhouse had.
There were piles of books tied up with string
Some old ones and some new.
There seemed to be stories with each little thing
Now sold for a quarter or two.

There are people who tell you, “We must change with the times”
They think I’m just an old fool
So the buses go by on their way to the town
But I still love The Little Old School!
Clubs and Organizations

Scout Troop No. 91

Showing their 4-H lambs at Achievement Days. Patty Peterson, Paul Young and Curtis Miller, from the Lads and Lassies 4-H Club.

The Clover Maids 4-H Club
Back Row: Betty Larson, Frances Collett, Koreen South, Mildred South, leader.
Front Row: Rita Mattern, Mary Ostlund; Annabelle Rask

Gene and Craig Jepsen of the Lads and Lassies with their 4-H calves.

Back Row: Ruth Cowman, Linda Harden, Lois Fargo, Diane Jepsen, Mary Gill, Barbara Miller, Joan Jepsen, Jean Fairley. Front Row: Judy Fargo, Marcia Miller, Gail Harden, Jeanette Jepsen, Cheryl Jepsen

Organizations

THE GRANGE—The first farm organization among the settlers on the bottom was the Grange. Three Granges were organized in January, 1874, in the area between the James River and the county line. On January 10, Dakota Grange No. 47 was organized with 15 men and 8 women at Gayville: Mr. and Mrs. Van Epps, Mr. and Mrs. Bronson, Mr. and Mrs. Davenport, Mr. and Mrs. Clark West, Mr. and Mrs. Newton Blodgett, Mr. and Mrs. Burke, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Keith and Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester Fargo. By the end of 1875, the Grange influence was on the wane and by 1877, most units were defunct. The handicaps under which the farmers were struggling worked against the success of the Grange. There was no escape from the credit system in spite of the efforts of the Grange officials against buying machinery on credit.

FARMER’S ALLIANCE—The Alliance first appeared in Dakota Territory in February, 1881 when a group of Yankton County farmers received a charter. The Alliance urged that the immigration bureau be abolished, since they felt that Dakota could support only a limited number of inhabitants. They were fairly effective when they supported issues, but lost ground when they engaged in partisan politics. They were inactive by the turn of the century.

FARMER’S UNION—In 1917, the Farmer’s Union was gaining strength in South Dakota. John Batcheller was a strong supporter of this organization and by 1917 was state vice-president. On October 9th, 1918, Mr. Batcheller was elected state president. There were several locals organized in this area, among them being the Dewey Local, organized on the 28th day of January, 1924. Lee Lane was elected president; W. H. Welch, secretary-treasurer; Norman Pederson, conductor; Joe Patrick vice president; and Virgil Robinson, door keeper. The Farmer’s Union is still a strong voice in legislative areas, but the locals have given way to county organizations and membership in this area has dropped. There is still a Farmer’s Union Auxiliary in the Meckling Community.

CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Strong county organizations, rather than the local farm organizations, seems to be the trend. The Crop Improvement Association sponsored through the county extension office and organized in the early 1940’s, has many members from the bottomland area in the Yankton and Clay County organizations.

LIVESTOCK FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

The Yankton Livestock Feeders was organized in 1948. The purpose is to work for the good of the industry through education and legislation. Clay County has a strong Livestock Feeders organization, too.

MISSOURI VALLEY ALFALFA GROWERS AND PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION

In 1966, hay producers of the area formed an organization to advertise and promote their crop. This organization has approximately 200 members growing about 10,000 acres of alfalfa. Hans Miller is president of the organization; Donald Moore, vice president; Dale Bye, secretary; Pat Johnson, treasurer; and Alva Jepsen, Dutch Burwitz and Milton Johnson, board members.

For the last five years, Hay Day has been held in Gayville in August complete with Hay Queen, a parade, tractor pull, street carnival, dance and other special entertainment. This year, 1972, Hay Day is being replaced by the celebration of Gayville’s Centennial which is set for August 25th to the 27th.

Rudolph Christensen Post No. 237
The American Legion

Following World War I there was great interest among the returning veterans to have an organization of citizen soldier veterans banded together to help the disabled, the widows and children of fallen comrades and to provide help for community programs and in general, work together for a better community, state and nation.

After the national and state organizations were under way, many of the veterans of the Gayville area desired to belong to such an organization. After several meetings in the print shop operated by C. C. Thorne a charter from the department of S. Dak. was issued on September 24, 1925 with the following charter members: C. C. Thorne, Bernt Larson, George Smith, L. C. Hansen, Art Ward, Elmer Ward, P. M. Olson, Ole Lee, Oscar Olson, Clarence Snow, Charles Benson, Willis Odland, James Ryken, Jake Peterson and Roy Hills.

The Post was named for Rudolph Christensen who had given his life in the war. It was assigned the number 237 by the South Dakota department. C. C. Thorne was elected the first post commander. Early day meetings were held in the print shop. The Methodist Church Ladies Building which stood next to the cafe in Gayville, as well as the Olson Body Shop were Legion homes until the present building was acquired.

During the early 1930’s a “Sons of the Legion” drum and bugle corps was organized under the direction of Oscar Olson. This organization made itself known throughout the state of South Dakota and surrounding states. The group appeared in the Legion Convention in Hot Springs, Sioux Falls, and Sioux City as well as nearby towns. Those who recall the group also remember their regular performances on the main street of Gayville. It was dur-
ing this period that weekly dances were held in the Legion Hall to help pay for the building. Many hours of fine music was provided by Oscar Olson, James Haggin, Willis Odland and others.

One of the activities of the early post was the organization of the Honor Guard and Rifle Squad for military funerals and programs on Memorial Day and Armistice Day. Some of the men who served in this group under the squad leader Oscar Olson were Eddie Olson, Peter Olson, Bennie Snow, Bernard Garvey, T. V. Byrkeland, Willis Odland, Roy Hills, Elmer Ward, George Edgerton, Anchor Bye, Harry Nelson, Bernt Larson, Sherman Collett. The Honor Guard is still intact but is now made up of veterans of World War II, the Korean Conflict and the Viet Nam Era. Arnold Jensen has commanded the squad since 1946.

During the early years, the membership was usually from 30 to 50 members. Some who served as post commanders were: Willis Odland, Arthur Junker, Eddie Olson, Roy Hills, James Ross, James Haggin, T.V. Byrkeland, Peter Olson, Elmer Ward, George Edgerton, Bennie Snow, Eiler Jensen and A.C. Bye.

Today our Legion Post members from four major conflicts number approximately 117. Times have changed but the basic ideals of the Legion remain the same. To show appreciation and honor the men who worked so hard for the Legion, a 50th anniversary banquet was held in April of 1958. Legionnaires and their ladies came from near and far for the event. Four of the original charter members were able to present. American Legion programs still go on in the community: support of athletic programs for children, Memorial Day services, Boy’s State support, supplying crutches, wheel chairs, walkers for invalids. However as we close this brief history of Rudolph Christensen Post No. 237, we turn our thoughts to the veterans of our community from World War I who founded the post and worked so hard to make it a successful organization dedicated to community, state and nation.

Rudolph Christensen Post No. 237
American Legion Auxiliary

The Legion Auxiliary was organized by Mrs. J. S. Meyers, District Committeewoman. She installed Mrs. Arthur Junker as the first president and the charter was applied for January 5, 1926. Charter members were: Mrs. Anchor Bye, Mrs. Sherman Collett, Mrs. Roy Hills, Mrs. Arthur Junker, Mrs. Ole Odland, Mrs. Oscar Olson, Mrs. Eddie Olson, Miss Emma Olson (Erickson), Mrs. James Ryken, Mrs. George Smith, Mrs. Clinton Thorne, Mrs. George Van Osdel.

The purpose of the auxiliary was to help the Legion Post in their work, to aid the hospitalized or disabled veteran and his dependents, and to help the Legion Post honor the dead of every war. The auxiliary each year has made wreaths and marched with the Legion in their ceremonies on Memorial Day at the Mission Hill, Gayville, Danish, Meckling and Bergen Cemeteries, and marched in local parades.

They sell poppies and articles made by disabled veterans. They help with Christmas parties for veterans and help sort Christmas mail at the State Hospital. They donated to the first iron lung presented to Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton in 1941. They sponsor an Americanism Essay contest in the local high school and a poppy poster contest in the elementary school. They also participate in the Girls’ State program every year. Lora Collett was the first Girls’ Stater in 1947.

Community service projects have been the clearing and improvement of the town park, sponsoring home nursing classes, first aid classes, pre-school health and vaccination clinics. They helped sponsor the Sons of Legion Drum and Bugle Corps which was trained by Oscar Olson and performed at district and state conventions, fairs and celebrations. They sponsored a Cub Scout group for several years. The creed of the American Legion Auxiliary is “service above self to community, state and nation.”

Extension Clubs

Clay County Home Extension Clubs have been organized in Norway and Meckling Townships for many years. An extension club was organized in the area of the Clay-Yankton County Line in the early 1920’s, but there seems to be no record of its name or the length of its existence. Tillie Rask was president and the membership included Hattie Jensen and Hannah Sorenson.

NORWAY NEIGHBORS were organized in 1943. Mrs. Arthur Iverson, who was a charter member, is still a member. Mrs. Melvin Iverson has served as both county chairman and as district chairman.

BUSY FINGERS club was organized in October of 1948. There are eight charter members who are still members: Mrs. Jess Severson, Mrs. Esther Bottolfson, Mrs. Orville Jasperson, Mrs. Norman Knutson, Mrs. Morten Sorenson, Mrs. J. J. Kennedy, Mrs. Helen Moore, and Mrs. Dora Iverson. The Busy Fingers Club at one time organized a kitchen band which appeared at many local affairs as well as the state meeting in 1955 and the Siouxland Farm Show.

MECKLING EXTENSION CLUB was organized in 1955. Mrs. Les Zeller and Mrs. Harlin Nelson are charter members who are still members of the club. Mrs. Les Zeller served as county chairman.

There must have been a Gayville Extension Club at one time, since two former Gayville residents, Mrs. J. Aaseth and Mrs. Merrill Powers served as county officers in 1926 and 1928. But our research hasn’t turned up any more information about them. We do know that the members of this extension club formed the nucleus for a study club which was organized in 1928.

GAYVILLE STUDY CLUB was organized in 1928 by a group of women living in and around Gayville. Mrs. J. Rustad was the first president, Mrs. Joe Woodring, vice-president and Mrs. Merrill
Powers, secretary-treasurer. They became Federated the following year. Membership has varied from 12 to 25, in 1961, the name was changed to "Gayville Women's Club". Of the charter members only one, Mrs. Louis Aaseth, is still a member.

During the early years, the members often gave plays to raise money for their projects. One of their most ambitious projects was their library. It was first a corner in the postoffice, later a corner in a store and then a rented room. Finally they bought a small house and had it repaired and some shelves built for the books. Donations of books, a table and some chairs made it comfortable. A few of the children were avid readers so that it was hard to keep enough books but there was a general lack of interest by the adults of the community, so the library was discontinued and the property sold. The last few years, a summer reading program has been maintained for children of the community which has been quite successful. The club for many years conducted a flower show which everyone enjoyed. Present officers are Mrs. Viola Nelson, chairman; Mrs. Chester Peterson, secretary-treasurer.

AMERICAN RED CROSS—GAYVILLE BRANCH

During World War I, Gayville had a very active branch of the American Red Cross. They raised $1,675.00 with a sale of donated items in March 1918. Under the leadership of Mrs. Martin Dahl and Mrs. George Mortensen, the Gayville branch of the Red Cross contributed hand knitted articles to the war effort. They made 319 pairs of socks, 62 sweaters, 4 helmets, 1 scarf and 25 pair of wristlets. Mrs. Anna Carlson was the champion knitter. She had made 91 pr. of socks, 21 sweaters, 8 pr. of wristlets and 1 muffler.

GAYVILLE MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The Gayville Missionary Society was active in the thirties and forties. Leaders were Mrs. Paul Olson and Mrs. Glen Woodring. Other members were Mrs. Elmer Aaseth, Mrs. Louis Aaseth, Mrs. Tillie Cowman, Mrs. Wilmer Doescher, Mrs. L. C. Olson, Mrs. Make Pederson, Mrs. Tillie Rask, Mrs. O. N. Rinnan, Mrs. James Ryken, Mrs. A. P. Sonstegard and Mrs. George Young. Their monthly programs consisted of roll call, music and Bible study.

BUSY BEE CLUB

Mrs. Henning Hansen organized the Busy Bee Club in 1919 among family members as a social organization and as a way to send gifts and memorials to relatives and friends. Charter members were her daughters and her daughter-in-law: Sena (Mrs. Julius Erickson), Annie (Mrs. Phillip Anderson), Christina (Mrs. Chris Hanson), Hilda (Mrs. Einer Jepsen), Mrs. Harry Hansen, Mrs. Martin Hansen and Alma and Olga who were not yet married. Later the club expanded to include other relatives. The group meets once a month and Gladys Carlson is the present presiding officer.

FRIENDSHIP CLUB

The Friendship Club of Gayville is an outgrowth of a cemetery circle of years ago. Mrs. Henry Mormon is president and Mrs. Henry Ryken is secretary-treasurer. The Friendship Club include some members outside the community. They have a food sale and bazaar once a year to raise money for worthwhile causes.

Campfire Girls

During the twenties there was an active Campfire Girls unit at Gayville. Frances Harden remembers being a member when the leader was Helen Huntoon, from 1920 to 1924. Later some of the members were Evelyn Smith, Myrna Wetteland, Gladys Lee, Bernice Mortensen, Louise Oleson, Renee Garvey and Signe Olson. Adelaide Aaseth and Hazel Peterson were guardians.

Girl Scouts

At Meckling, there was an active Girl Scout Troop for a time. Miss Unruh, a teacher in the Meckling school was the leader and some of the members were Beulah Gill, Wanda Nelson, Marie Gunderson and Delores Ahrendt. They took hikes in the woods along the Missouri River and had camping trips at Swan Lake, near Viborg.

Boy Scouts

In 1917, some 90 Boy Scouts from Yankton came to Gayville to form a troop. As far as is known, they were unsuccessful at that time. But in 1953, Pastor Glenn Phillips came to Gayville as the Methodist minister. Boy Scout Troop No. 91 was organized about that time with Pastor Phillips as the scout leader and Bob South as assistant leader. Charles Fargo was chairman of the scout committee and the Methodist Congregation sponsored the troop. Members of the troop were from the Gayville and Meckling area and included Ronnie Dutcher, Bill Andre, Danny Collett, James Fargo, Allen Sandau, John Beavers, Gary Heier, Larry Blodgett, Richard Peterson, Roger Pederson, Clifford Olson and Billy Beavers. This group took part in a weeks outing in the Black Hills.

In July 1957, The Boy Scouts of America held a jamboree at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania and Scout Troop No. 91 and their parents undertook the ambitious project of raising money to help defray the expenses of any scout member who wished to go. The troop of six members was the largest group from a single troop in all of the Sioux Council. Those who went were Scout Don Johnson; Explorers Warren Walraven; Ronnie Dutcher; Bill Andre; Richard Peterson, patrol leader; Jim Fargo, junior assistant and Pastor Phillips, scout leader. They were among the 62,500 scouts who took part in the many varied
activities, including a speech by the then vice-president Nixon.

A cub scout troop was organized, sponsored by the Gayville Lutheran Church, which was in existence several years. Den mothers were Dot Snow and Mary Buckman for the year 1958 and it was very active that year. The following year it became inactive after several months of trying to recruit new den mothers.

4-H Clubs

One of the first 4-H clubs in the area was the JUG (Just Us Girls) club in 1922-1923 which had 15 members and had sewing as their project. Frances Harden was listed as the local leader, with Lola Sorensen, president and Adelaide Aseth as secretary.

We find no record of 4-H clubs during the thirties, but in the 40’s, 4-H began to be more popular. Some of the clubs which started at that time were the Clover Maids, Meckling Livestock Club, Meckling Maidens 4-H Club, and the Jolly 9 4-H club.

The Clover Maids was organized in 1943 with Mrs. Willard South as leader and Mrs. Loren Stewart as assistant leader. Charter members were: Betty Larson, Frances Collett, Dot South, Rita Mattern, Mary Ostlund and Annabelle. The Clover Maids this club remained active several years and grew in membership to about a dozen members.

The Jolly 9 4-H Club was organized in 1942, with Mrs. Emil Kohlscheen as the leader and Winston Wetteland as assistant leader. Members were Harlan and Marlowe Jacobsen, Edward Kohlscheen, Keith Binns, Junior Wetteland, Kenneth and James Snow, Gerald and Wayne Jepsen and Dwayne Gardner.

The Meckling Livestock Club started in the 1940’s with Don Beaty as leader. Later Les Zeller became the leader. This club is still active.

The Meckling Maidens were organized by Mrs. Les Zeller in 1947. Members were Donna and Patty Long, Rhota Hollingsworth, Joyce and Janice Stevenson, Marie Kryger, Pat Wedmore and Glennys Bolson. The name was changed to Modern Maidens and some of the early members, in addition to those already named were Mary, Eunice, Lois and Judy Fargo, Kathleen and Karen Kaeberle, Gladys, Joyce and Janet Slagle, Mary Kennedy, Lois, Julie and Beverly Bottolfson. Carol, Suzanne, Ruth, Nancy and Jane Sealey and Joan Paulson. The leaders were Esther Bottolfson and Wilma Kennedy and the county agent at that time was Louise Welch and she was replaced by Mary Fargo Jensen. These women helped the girls in their various projects in cooking, sewing and handicraft (home life) through the years. Many awards were received by the 4-Hers for their entries in the yearly achievement days. Demonstrations were stressed and are now a requirement.

Besides the projects carried by the individual girls, they enjoyed many activities together, such as serving luncheons for their mothers at which time they modeled the garments they had made. One time they served breakfast and another time a dinner. They also took part in several parades and Rural Life services and Christmas parties. As the club grew, it was divided and the Modern Maidens became the Country Gals. This year the leaders are Esther Bottolfson, Delores Jensen, Mary Bottolfson and Lois Kryger. The members are Mary Kay, Jeanne and Susan Bartels; Jeanette, Nadeen, Glynis and Kersti Bye, Diane Bottolfson, Janel Chancellor, Valerie Iverson, Karla and Denise Kronai, Judy, Linda, Sharon and Joanne Jensen, Susan Jepsen, Rebecca Kryger, Naomi Lane, Shelly Sommervold, Naomi Turner, Sara Tiahrt and Jayne Lewison. Their officers are: president-Karla Olson, Vice-president-Rhonda Bottolfson, Secretary-Lynn Bartels, and Treasurer-Diane Benson.

The Gayville Homemakers were organized in the fall of 1954, with ten charter members. Leaders were Mrs. Lloyd Harden and Mrs. Carl Miller. This club was reorganized to include boys in 1959 and the name was changed to Lads and Lassies. The Lads and Lassies was organized with 24 members: Linda and Gail Harden, Nancy and Patsy Lee, Craig and Gene Jepsen, Marcia, Connie and Curtis Miller, Gail and Michael Buckman, Patty Peterson, Theresa and Paul Young, Holly and Monte Bratberg, Ann and Carol Petrik, Patsy Grimmer, Julie Orton, Karla Pigg, Gary Ryken and Shirley Bevers. Membership increased to over 40 members by 1965 when they disbanded and divided into Baker’s Dozen, a girls club and the Gayville Achievers, a boys club. Mrs. Herley Miller was leader of the girls’ club and Vernon Halvorson, the boys’ club. Over the years, the Lads and Lassies won one local and district talent contest with a duet by Michael Miller and Michael Schmidt, “I’m Little but I’m Loud” and in their short existence, the Gayville Achievers did it with a clever novelty number called “The Whistlers”. The Baker’s Dozen is now the Fem Petites with Mrs. Gale Erickson as leader.
Aaseth, John O. and Christina

John O. Aaseth was born July 3, 1850 in Hedenmarken, Norway, passed his early life on a farm and received his education in his native land. In 1872, he emigrated to the United States and settled in Dakota Territory. He first farmed in Norway Township but in 1874, he moved to Gayville and took a position in the pioneer store of A.B. Willey. The following year he started to work for Iver Bagstad in his store, later becoming a partner. In 1879, Mr. Aaseth married Christina Nelson and they were the parents of eight children: Oliver, Elmer, Carl, Julian, Alma, (Mrs. Warren Noll), Louis, Clara (Mrs. James Klufas), and Myrtle (Mrs. Ralph Irish). Mr. Aaseth represented Yankton County in South Dakota’s first legislature. He continued to manage the mercantile business after Mr. Bagstad’s death, until his own ill health forced him to retire. He died in 1925. He and his wife are buried in the Gayville Cemetery.

LOUIS Aaseth was born in 1887, and was married to Katherine Blodgett in September of 1909. They are the parents of three children: Marcene (Mrs. Dale Erriott) Keith and Dale, none of whom live in the Gayville community. The Erriotts lived for a time in Gayville and Mr. Erriott taught in the Gayville school system. Louis worked in the Security State Bank at one time and later in the Farmer’s Store. The Aaseths have been active in the Methodist Church and Louis served as treasurer of the town board for over 40 years, besides being clerk of the school board for many years.

OLIVER AASETH lived all his life in the Gayville community. He never married. All the other Aaseth children moved out of the community.

Ahrendt, Ludwig

Ludwig Ahrendt came to America from Mechlburg, Germany with his mother and five sisters at the age of five. He married Matilda Kaeberle who was born in Germany also. They lived in Hutchinson County where Louis was born in 1888. Brothers Albert and John were older than Louis. The rest of the children are: William, Martha (Mrs. Delmar Moore), Clara (Mrs. Herbert Hamann), Otto, Elmer. Matilda died and Ludwig married Minnie Boos Holmes. She had three children: Lloyd, Leila and Nora Holmes. Ludwig and Minnie were the parents of two children: Lucy who died when she was five and Benhardt.

ALBERT Ahrendt was almost killed by lightning and moved to Montana after the incident which killed four mules and left him unconscious for hours. He never married.

LOUIS Ahrendt married Ida Myron and they were the parents of the following children: Lucille (Mrs. Hans Miller), Ludwig, Leila (Mrs. Woodrow Bird) Caroline, who died at age 16, Delores (Mrs. John Lund), Mamie (Mrs. Virgil D’Lamater). Lud married Alice Johnson and they had three children: Gwenneth, Devon Lud and Gregg. They were divorced and Lud married Mrs. Ardis Harris, a widow with three children. They live at Rapid City.

WILLIAM Ahrendt married Elsie Dean and they lived in section 28, Meckling Township for a time. Two of their children live in Vermillion: Don and Clara (Mrs. Lawrence Burrell).

OTTO Ahrendt lived in the Meckling area for a time. He married Rebecca Seiler and they had two children who died while young children. Otto moved to San Diego in 1942.

ELMER Ahrendt was killed in a fireworks accident when he was a young man.

BENHARDT Ahrendt was a law officer in Murdo for many years.

Aman, Albert

Albert Aman, born in 1847, had come west from Rockford, Illinois, and freighted supplies from Sioux City to Fort Randall. He met and married Margarete, eldest daughter of the Patrick Dineens, who came with her family from Wales when she was twelve years old. They bought 160 acres adjoining the Dineen farm. Sometimes when her husband was in the field using their four horses and Margarete needed groceries or other supplies, she would take two pails of eggs, walk the eight mile round trip to Gayville and back, exchanging her eggs for the things that she needed. In the summer she and her children went berry picking. They once picked a washtub of gooseberries. They also found plums in the bushes along the roadside and wild grapes in abundance which they made into grape wine and jelly.

Gypsies often called on the Aman’s, begging for chickens and garden vegetables.

There were 11 children, 3 of whom died in infancy. The children were: Albert, who still lives, in Rockford, Illinois and has been an invalid for 14 years; Stella (Mrs. George Babb); Nellie (Mrs. Tom Babb); DeLance; Burnett “Barnie”; Byron “Barnie”; Fayette, who lives in Phoenix, Arizona; and Mildred, “Abbie” (Mrs. Boyd Dutcher).

BYRON Aman married Martha Burwitz and their children are: Donald of Yankton, Gerald who farms near Lesterville and Dorothy (Mrs. Doyle Stewart) of Yankton.

Albert Aman died in 1914 at the age of 67 years and his wife died at the age of 90.

Anderson, Edward

Edward Anderson was born in Minnesota in 1856, and went with his parents to Nebraska. They moved to Yankton County, Dakota Territory, and located on a claim on the Missouri River, where he lived for one year. In the spring of the following year he took up a claim on the NE1/4 of section 13 which remained in the family until his son Philip retired. He married Miss Hainsie Tety on February 20, 1880 in Dixon County, Nebraska. Their children were: Paul H. (deceased), Alice, Philip, Simon, Hilda and Eta.

Philip married Anna Hansen and they farmed the home place until they retired and moved into Gayville. There were no children. Philip was born in 1885 and died in 1954 and Anna was born in 1885 and died in 1967.

Andre, William

William Andre was born at Gruno, Germany in 1840. He came to America at the age of 27 in 1867 and that next year he married Dorothea Hansen of Omaha, Nebraska. They lived at West Point, Nebraska for six years. They moved to Yankton and then in 1874 to the farm they purchased near Gayville where he lived for 33 years. In 1885, Williams wife died and was buried in the Danish Cemetery. William was left with six small children: Richard, Amelia (Molly), Fred, Herman, William and Mary (Mrs. William Burwitz, Sr.). In 1886, Mr. Andre returned to Germany. A former sweetheart, Georgina, had just lost her husband the year before and she was left with 6 children. So William brought her and her six children to America and they were married and she and her six children joined Mr. Andre and his six children in the Andre home. In 1896, Mr. Andre built a large brick home consisting of 8 bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, library, sitting room, parlor and 5 large basement rooms. The parlor was carpeted from wall to wall in plush carpeting with furniture in blue satin. This room was used only for rare occasions. The Andres entertained lavishly including dances for which the Magorien orchestra played. In 1906, Mr. Andre died and was buried in the Vangen Cemetery. The funeral was in the Gayville Lutheran Church. Rev. Dahl officiating. When the procession went north from Gayville they were met by two spring wagons of Indians who stopped and waited at the top of their voices in sympathy for the mourners.

Several years after William and Georgina had been married, her mother, Mrs. Augusta Wunderlich and her daughter and husband, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Klatt, Sr. came to America. Mrs. Andre’s mother died in 1913. Mrs. Andre lived with her son Carl and his family until her death in 1938 when she was 96 years old. They were buried at Vangen also.

The Andre boys, Richard never married. He died in 1960 and is buried beside his mother in the Danish Cemetery. Fred moved to
California. He and his wife had three children: Harold, Eugene and Dorothy. William and his wife Ina resided in California, also, and they had one son, Homer. Herman remained in this area, married Margaret Clark and they farm in section 33 of Meckling Township. They are the parents of three children: Janice (Mrs. Clifford Miller), William Elmer and Robert. William married Ellen Hansen and they live at Lake Andes. Robert married Wanda Polestra and they live at Akron, Iowa.

Arthur, James B.

James Arthur and his wife Margaret (McFarland) had come from Scotland to Knouton, Quebec, Canada. Then, after some time, they had come to Dakota with their family: Robert, born in 1866; Mary (Mrs. George Carpenter) born in 1868; Jane (Mrs. Will Schrader) born in 1869; Isabella (Mrs. Edward S. Beaty) born in 1874. They also had an adopted daughter, Ellen, who later went back to Canada and married Margaret's brother.

The Arthur’s were strong supporters of the Congregational Church and Mrs. Arthur was the Sunday School Superintendent there for years.

Bagstad, Peter and Maren

Peter and Maren Bagstad came to America in 1849 from Birin in southern Norway. They came to Dakota from Wisconsin in 1867 with their children: Iver, Mathias, Emil and Thea (Mrs. Charles Olson). They settled on a farm 4 miles west of Gayville and three miles north. Peter died in 1886 and Maren in 1891.

Iver Bagstad was born in 1843 in Norway and came with his parents to eastern Wisconsin at the age of seven. When he came to Dakota he bought the threshing machine in Yankton County and that fall of 1869, he threshed all the grain in Yankton County and some in Clay County. In 1868, he married Berthe Olson. Both children from this marriage died as infants and his wife died in 1872. He moved into Gayville in 1873 and started a small store. Mr. Bagstad married Elena Aaseth, sister of John O. Aaseth in 1873. Their children were: Clara, Pauline, Ida and Chester. As his business grew, he took in his brother-in-law as partner and devoted most of his time to the livestock business. He was postmaster for Gayville for 16 years, with the post office in his store. In 1901, he retired and moved to Volin. He and his wife are buried in Vangen Cemetery.

Batcheller, Rev. Charles

Rev. Batcheller had had a very successful year in Des Moines, Iowa when he was sent to Yankton by the bishop at the Northwest Iowa Methodist Conference to work in the Dakota Territory to build up the first Methodist Church in Yankton. He arrived in Yankton with his wife and two daughters, Helen and Martha, in 1866. He found three wooden structures on third street.

On January 26, 1868, son John W. was born, while they were living at the home of S.C. Fargo on the corner of 3rd and Douglas.

In 1869, Rev. Batcheller took up a homestead eight miles east of Yankton. Here Mary Batcheller was born in October 1869. While living on the homestead, Rev. Batcheller was the custodian of 100 rifles which he was supposed to distribute among the settlers in case of an Indian uprising.

At the age of nine, John’s eyesight was badly impaired by a severe case of measles so that he was forced to quit school. He went to work to earn money for glasses on farms at Viborg and Volin and in Nebraska. In 1880, his father took him to Mr. Vernon, Iowa, where he finished the grades, high school and college by 1897. He served three small churches in NE Iowa as a minister. On September 25th, 1900 he married Mary Beth Reeder. They left for Evanston, Illinois where he received his masters degree from Northwestern University, in June, 1901. He then came to the farm which his father had homesteaded.

His one thought was to work for the betterment of the farmers. One of his first projects was to work with other farmers to build a telephone line into Gayville. He joined the Grange and remained a member for a number of years. In 1917 he joined a new Farmer’s Organization, The South Dakota Farmer’s Union. He struggled to organize locals against opposition so strong that one public demonstration buried him in effigy. He rose to the office of state president in 1918 and made many trips to Washington, D.C. to get the help of Congressmen and the agriculture department to get better prices for farm products. He was state president until 1929 and after that continued as a director.

He and Mary had five sons: George, John, Paul, Harry and Louis and one daughter. His daughter, Mrs. Blanche Dahl and her son Keith remain on the old Batcheller homestead, Keith being the 4th generation of the family to live on the place.

Beaty, James

James Beaty was born 1838-1901. He married Sarah Elizabeth Baker (1843-1874). Their children were Arthur (1868), Edward (1870), William (1872), Mary Edith (1875), Fannie (1885), (Mrs. Louis Mikelson).

EDWARD Beaty and Isabel Arthur were married in 1901 and they remained two years in the Meckling community, during which time their son Son was born. Then in 1903, they went to Homingford, Nebraska to work on the Taylor Ranch. Here Doris (Pelz) was born in 1905, and Florence (Kaeberle) was born in 1907. They moved back to the Meckling area and David was born in 1910 and Beulah was born in 1912. They at first lived on the east edge of Meckling. They then moved to the farm in section 3 of Norway Township which they bought from Ole Gjetle and Chris Larson.

Mrs. Beaty was musically talented, played the organ and piano in church for many years and taught piano lessons. The Beaty family often gathered around the organ and sang while their mother played.

Berg, Thomas and Guro

Lars (Louis) Berg
The Thomas Berge came to America from Opdal, Norway in 1872 with their sons Ingebrit, 8 years old, and Lars, 2 years old and daughter, Marit, 8 years old. They settled on a farm in Section 20 of Meckling Township where their daughter, Marit, was born in 1875. They received the patent to their land in 1877.

Mr. Berg moved his family to stay with friends in Volin Township during the 1880 flood, but he wanted to stay and take care of his livestock. He was marooned in a corncrib with nothing but ear corn to eat and when rescued, was delirious from hunger and cold.

Before the year was over, he died from a broken neck caused by a fall from a load of hay. Guro, his wife, died two years later, in October of 1883, of consumption. Ingebrit in September of 1885 at age 19 years; Marit, in June of 1886 at age 11 and Ingebrit, in December of 1886 at age 22 years, all of consumption or tuberculosis.

Now only 16 years old Lars (Louis) was left. Hans Myron was appointed his guardian and he went to stay with them until he became lonely for someone of his own age. Then he went to stay with the Gjetles until he was grown.

In 1899, when he was 19 years old, he married Estella Torstenson, who had come with her parents from Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin to live in Clay County. Their family consisted of two daughters, Lena, (Mrs. Murvle Stevens) born in 1900 and Dorothy (Mrs. Herman Wairaven) born in 1911.

Lars (Louis) Berg died in 1927 and is buried at the Meckling Cemetery. Estella died in 1964 and is buried beside her husband. Marit Berg is also buried in the Meckling Cemetery, but the family is not sure where the other members of the family are buried.

Berkeley, Julius and Lewis

Julius Berkeley was born in 1855 in Richwood, Wisconsin, the son of John L. Berkeley. In 1878, at the age of 23, Julius and his brother Lewis moved to Nebraska. Then on July 9, 1880, they arrived in Dakota by prairie schooner. Julius got work in the Iver Bagstad store and lived in the Gayville Hotel. During the 1881 flood Julius was chief cook at the hotel, feeding the boat crew of Captain Lavender as they rescued the stranded settlers and took them to safety.

In 1883, Julius went back to Wisconsin to marry Nicolina (Nettie) Hanson and bring her back to share his room in the hotel. They lived there over a year and their daughter Cora was born there. That year Julius bought a 160 acre farm northwest of Gayville for $10 dollars an acre, and they moved there in October. Mrs. Berkeley used to lock her two little daughters Cora and Nima in the corncrib to play while she helped in the field or walked to town for groceries.

In addition to their daughters, they had two sons, Arthur and Melvin.

Cora married Frank Van Osdal, son of Abraham L. Van Osdal. She now lives in Yankton. Nima who was in educational work in New York City, is now retired and lives in Connecticut. Arthur a retired office and farm manager, lives in Sioux Falls and Melvin, an Iowa banker, now lives in Winter Park, Florida.

Nettie Berkeley died in 1937 and Julius in 1946, at the age of 91. They are buried in the Mission Hill cemetery.

Lewis Berkeley was born in 1853 in Richland County, Wisconsin, two years earlier than Julius. Their parents had emigrated from Norway in 1849. After Julius and Lewis made their way to Dakota in 1880, Lewis went back to Wisconsin and brought back a bride, whom he married, and her children. Their children were Leroy, and Jesse. Jesse was killed in an auto accident in 1968 and his wife Margarette still lives on the farm. There were no children. Leroy, who never married, lives in Yankton.

Blodgett, Myron

Myron Blodgett was born in 1826 in Massachusetts. He was married in Indiana to Phoebe Harris. They had one son Omar, born in 1846. Phoebe died and later he married Sarah Crank. They moved to Tama County, Iowa. Here James Newton, 1854, Eli (1856-1858), Martha (1858-1859), Sherman Myron, 1864, and Artincie 1867, were born. In 1869, the Blodgett family came by way of covered wagon and oxen to Dakota. Their claim in Meckling Township was covered with water when they got there so they continued west and bought a farm in section 2 and 3 of Gayville Township. The first year they lived in a dugout. Myron Blodgett died in 1889. He and his wife Sarah are buried in the Mission Hill Cemetery.

JAMES NEWTON BLODGETT was born at Montere, Iowa. When they came to Dakota Territory, it was his job to drive the cattle. That fall he went back to Iowa to live with relatives and go to school. The next year he and another boy lived in a dugout in Yankton where the Sacred Heart Hospital now stands so they could go to school. Then, in 1874, Gayville had school in a claim shanty and J. Newton went there. In 1882, James Newton married Elizabeth Douglas. They were married by the Reverend Thomas Wright, a United Brethren minister. They lived on the home place until 1885 when they moved to the farm where Crone Roosen now lives. The Blodgetts were the parents of five children: Kathleen Elizabeth, Sarah Artincie (1888), George, (1892) and Roy (1897). Mr. Blodgett served on the school board for many years. He was instrumental in building both school buildings and the addition of a gymnasium. Mrs. Blodgett was an active member of the Women's Society of the Methodist Church. Mr. Blodgett died in 1931 and his wife sold the farm in 1934 to Peter Roosen and spent the rest of her life with her children. She died in 1954. Mr. and Mrs. L. Newton Blodgett are buried in the Mission Hill Cemetery.

Kathleen married Louis Aaseth, Sarah Artincie married and they made their home in Sioux Falls where George also lives. Roy Blodgett was the youngest son of the J.N. Blodgetts. He married Lucille Sticley and they lived about two miles north of Gayville where George also lives.

Bottolfson, Ole

OLE BOTTOLFSON, Sr. was born near Bergen, Norway in 1839 and came to America in 1845. His wife Brytteva was born in Vennesetrende Lunde, Norway in 1837 and immigrated to Dane County, Wisconsin with her parents in 1844. Ole and Brytteva
Bryn, Christian

CHRIS Bryn was born in Christiania, Norway in 1870 and came to America in 1888 on the Prince Albert. He went to Sioux City, Iowa to work. From there he went to Gery, Oklahoma where he met Ida May Robison and they were married July 15, 1893. Then in April, 1903, they brought their family to South Dakota to live. He worked several years for Bagstad and Aaseth Co. He was a carpenter by trade. When they first came to Gayville, the family lived south of town where the Orie Barnes hay mill used to be. The Bryns had two daughters Maude (Mrs. Joe Quick) and Brolin (Mrs. Tillman). Christian and his wife, Ida, both died in 1949 and are buried in the Trinity Lutheran Cemetery south of Gayville.

Brynellson, Halvor

Halvor left Norway for America, April 18, 1843. He probably went to Wisconsin as many of the Norwegians did. Then during the California gold rush in 1849, he made two trips to California. Once, he went around the Cape and another time by an ox team, by way of St. Louis. He did find gold but was robbed and came back as poor as he left. He came across the Missouri River from Nebraska in the spring of 1860 and staked out his claim on the edge of the lake. He lived for some time in a dugout on the creek bank southeast of the town site. Then he had a log cabin to live in.

He wrote his niece in Norway and told her that she and her family, the Knute Olsons should come to America to take care of him. But by the time they arrived in the spring of 1873, he had been persuaded to give up part of his land for the townsite for the sum of $1.00, so the Olsons settled on the 91 acres which remained. The family is not sure when he died nor where he was buried.

Buckman, Henry

Henry (Heinrich) Buckman, born May 29, 1830 near Asendorf, Germany, traveled alone to the United States about 1847. He settled in Dubuque County, Iowa. His younger brother Frederick joined him there about 1851. Henry married Doras Quade in 1857. They were not blessed with children and Doras must have died several years later, but the family has no information about it. Henry married Anna Felderman in 1868. They lived in Iowa until after Anna’s death in 1880. Henry and Anna had five children: Doris (Mrs. Chris Hanson) Emma (who died in infancy), John, George and Albert. In 1881, Henry married Sarah McElwain of

Ole Botolfson, Sr.
Mrs. Ole Botolfson, Sr.

were married in 1855 and three days after their marriage they moved to Winneshiek County, Iowa. In 1859, they were with a group of Norwegians who came to Nebraska, across the river from Vermillion, and waited for Dakota Territory to be opened for settlement. With them were Brytvea’s brother, Ole H. Larson and perhaps her two sisters, Mrs. Hans I. Hanson and Mrs. Julia Agerborg. On August 10, 1859, this little band of immigrants crossed the Missouri and settled in Norway Township.

The Botolfsons were the parents of ten children: Bottolf (Bert), Elias, Loyal, Benedict, Ira, Ole, Jr., Britta (Mrs. Helge Myron), Sarah (Mrs. John Gunderson), Anna (Mrs. Hans Myron) and Irena (Mrs. Will Gunderson). The Botolfsons were among the first people who on October 8th, 1864, organized the “Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Dakota Territory.” When this group divided they went with those who started the Bergen Congregation. Ole helped build their first church in 1871.

Ole was active in the new government of Clay County. He served as a county judge and treasurer. He also served two terms in the House of the Territorial Legislature. He and Captain Miner received grant 1 for the town of Meckling and helped plot the town. While he was county treasurer, he kept the county funds in a cowhide under the floor of their house.

Ole died in 1874 and is buried in the old Bergen Cemetery (now known as the Meckling Cemetery). His widow married Ole I. Hanson in 1876 and they remained on the homestead. They had one daughter, Anna. In 1883, they moved to Spirit Mound Township. Brytvea died in 1917 and Ole in 1928.

BOTTOLF BOTOLFSON married Bertha (Gjetle) Olson and they adopted Leona (Hall) (Mrs. Harry Larson). When Bottolf died, his widow married his brother Elias.

ELIAS BOTOLFSON married his brother’s widow, Bertha. They had no children.

LOYAL and BENEDICT didn’t marry.

IRA died at the age of one year.

OLE BOTOLFSON married Dorthea Jaugerson and their children were Odell, Elmer, Schuyler, Leonard (who died as a teenager), Nancy (Mrs. Norman Jacobson), Bertha (Mrs. Alva Larson), Adeline (Mrs. Alfred Kolmhaus) and two sons who died in infancy. Odell married Lorena Larson and they had one daughter Helen (Mrs. Thomas Cone). Elmer married Esther Kinless and their children were: Leonard, Richard, Russell, Lois (Mrs. Marion Kryger), Julie (Mrs. Gary Sorensen) Beverly, Gary and Larry. Leonard married Mary Lou Logue and they have four children: Rhonda, Diane, Julie and Michael. Richard married Darlene Davis and they have two sons, Jay and Mark. Russell married Eileen Gilbertson and they have four children: Karen, Karla, Brenda and Tammy. Leonard and Richard farm. Richard on the original Botolfson homestead.
Dubuque, Iowa. Henry and Sarah and family left Otter Creek shortly after their marriage for a farm northeast of Gayville in Dake County. This is the place where Bay Buckman now lives. Sarah was killed by lightning five years later in 1887, leaving two sons, Lincoln and Emory. Dora, then a girl of 17, helped her father raise her two stepbrothers: Lincoln, three years old and Emory, one and a half. Henry lived the latter part of his life in Yankton. He died in 1915 at age 85.


GEORGE BUCKMAN married Bertha (Birdie) Watry and they had one daughter, Margarette. George farmed for a while and later ran the Gayville Pharmacy. Margarette married George Edgerton of Meckling and they helped run the drug store for many years. They had one daughter Shirley (Mrs. David Foster). They have two sons, Dick and David. George died in 1936 and Birdie in 1971. They are both buried in the Gayville Cemetery. George and Margarette live in Rapid City.

ALBERT BUCKMAN married Myrtle Carr and they farmed north of Gayville and there are five living children: Albert, Jr. (Abbie), Vera (Mrs. G. E. Nelson) Ralph, Wilmer and Marcene, Ralph, the only one who remained in the community, married Myrtle White and they had three children: Barbara (Mrs. Douglas Swift) Robert and Bill. Ralph and Myrtle now live in Gayville. None of their children remained in the community.

LINCOLN BUCKMAN married Christine Ekedal and farmed north of Gayville. There were no children.

EMORY BUCKMAN married Anna Garvey in 1911 and they had two children: Florence (Mrs. Harold Buckman) and Donald. Donald married Mary Donovan of Volin and they live north of Gayville and have three children: Gay (Mrs. Larry Skov) Michael and Joan. Donald’s mother, Mrs. Emory Buckman, still lives on the family home nearby.

Burwitz, Georgina

Georgina Wonderly (1843-1939) was married to Wilhelm Burwitz and lived on a farm near Meckling, Minnesota, until 1888, when he left America and came to Germany in 1887, but had come back a visit to Germany and had persuaded her to come to America and marry him. The Burwitz children were: Gustava (Mrs. Iver Olson); Anna (Mrs. Henry Halbur); Friedchen (Mrs. Carl Wahlrauen) and Carl, Mrs. Georgina Andret lived with the Carl Burwitz family after the death of her husband. She was at the home of her daughter, Gustava when she died at the age of 96 years.

WILLIAM BURWITZ, Sr. married his stepfather, Mary Andre, in the late 1880’s and lived near the Andre place. Their children were: Martha (Mrs. Barney Amann); William, Jr.; Clarence; Florence and Bernice (Mrs. Clarence Olson). The White Hall Post Office, built with logs over a basement or dugout, was removed when their home was built in 1900. William, Jr., born in 1897, lived on a farm in section 24, Gayville Township. He married Emilia Kutzer in 1931 at Burke, South Dakota. He was a long time farmer until he retired and moved to Gayville. William and Emilia were the parents of three daughters; Marjorie (Mrs. John Jepsen); Shirley (Mrs. Clifford Bridges) and Judit (Mrs. Jack Newman. Marjorie and John farm in section 6, Norway Township and have two daughters. Clarence Burwitz married Christina Olson and they were the parents of two sons; Ronald and Gordon. Ronald farms with his father on their place west of Gayville, but lives in Yankton. He is married to Twila Wilson of Butte, Nebraska and they have three children: Donald and David, twins, and Cynthia. Gordon is an electrician in Yankton, is married to Doris Ruipier and they have three children: Shelley, Michael and Todd.

CARL BURWITZ was born in Stralund, Rogen Island, Germany in 1882 to Wilhelm and Georgina, the youngest of the six children. His father died when he was three years old and when he was four, he came to America with his mother. Carl married Bertha Clark in December 1916 in Sioux City. After the wedding, the Model T. Ford refused to start so they were taken to the train in a buggy drawn by a span of mules! Lamoine, their first child, was the first baby born in their house. He is an auctioneer and continues to live on the Burwitz farm with his mother. Laura, their daughter, was a welder at an aircraft factory on the West Coast during World War II. Upon returning she taught school and then married Lew Solem. They live at Watertown and have two sons. Carl died in 1971 at the age of 80.

Bye, Charles

Charles F. Bye was born in Trondhjem, Norway, Dec. 16, 1863. He came to America in 1881 at age 17 with his parents, Otta & Ragnild, brother Albert and sister Ellen. They homesteaded near Irene, S. Dak. Charles first job was as water boy on the railroad being built between Sioux City and Yankton. On Oct. 11, 1888, he married Nellie Walker and settled on a farm 2 miles south and two miles west of Gayville which he bought in 1887 from Lucy Bunker. He lived there the rest of his life except for two years (1902-1904) when he went to Atkin Co., Minn. He retained possession of his Yankton County farm and after fighting stumps and rocks, he returned to the Gayville farm where farming was easy. The Byes had nine children; Earl (died in infancy), Addie (Mrs. Perry Cloud), Clayton, Floyd, Clyde, Pearl (Mrs. Ray Schultz), Glenn, Hazel, Ellen (Mrs. Lawrence Moore). Nellie passed away at age 38 (1907). Charles married Jenny Buckman in 1916. They built a new modern 10 room house on the farm in 1917. Charles passed away in 1948 at the age of 86. Jenny passed away in 1949 at age 64. Glenn and Hazel were the only bye children to remain in the community.

GLEN B. BYE lived all his life on the home farm. He worked for neighbors in his early years. He still owns the farm which he bought in 1949. He married Mable Christopherson in 1923. To this union was born three children: Glenn, Donald Jepsen), Gerald C. and Dale Q. Dale married Norma Jean Taggett of Yankton and they have four children: Judy, Rex, Jim and Ricky.

HAZEN A. BYE worked for neighbor Bruce Wright for many years. He married Marie Koonen in 1926 and moved to the Meckling farm where he still lives. To this union was born three children: Roberta (Mrs. Donald Iverson), Gary and Douglas. Gary is married to Carol Ann Blair and they have five children: Jeanette, Todd, Nadeen, Glynis and Hazen. Douglas is married to Ramona Ruele and they have four children: Kirsten, Brook, Kelly and Brett.

Charles Bye and his children
children, son Ed and daughter Myrtle (Mrs. George McElwain). Sarah died when Will was 10 years old and Mrs. Fairley helped John bring up his children. John remarried and moved to Vohn.

WILL Cowman married Carrie Voglnid in 1892. She had come from Opdal, Norway with her parents at the age of 9. Will and Carrie had fourteen children, eleven of whom matured: Otto, Lucile (Hoxeng), Viola (Koch) Homer, Marie (Monson), Kenneth, Manford, Burdette, Janice (Davidson) and Mildred (South). They lived on the homestead and ran a threshing machine and a corn sheller for extra income. As his sons grew up, they went along to help with water hauling, pitching bundles and operating the steam engine. Will and Carrie lived to celebrate their 62nd wedding anniversary. Manford and Mildred (Mrs. William South) are the only members of the family on the bottom. Manford married and had four children: Judy (Mrs. Dave Hansen), Karen (Mrs. John Olson) Charles and Ruth (Mrs. Jerry Wubben). Charles married Judi Garvey and they have five children: Timothy, Todd, Tamara, Troy and Terry.

EDWARD V. Cowman was born near Gayville February 13, 1873. After leaving the farm, Edward engaged in the harness business and later in general merchandising. On November 16, 1898, he was married to Tillie Welby and to this union were born two daughters, Twila and Natalie. During the Wilson administration, Edward was appointed postmaster. Edward died at his home on Jan. 19, 1916. He was buried at Mission Hill. After his death, his wife Tillie was appointed postmistress, where she served until 1947. Twila and Natalie were teachers. Both married but are widows now.

Dahl, Rev. P. H.

Rev. P. H. Dahl

Reverend P. H. Dahl and his wife had three children when they arrived late in 1881—Anna, Hans and Inga. They lived in the tiny house south of the tracks until the large, square house straight west of the church was built in 1885. Louise and Sondre were born in the house south of the tracks and Alice, Wilhelm, Randolph, Margaret, Constance and Helga in the new parsonage, also Herbert and Roland who died in infancy. All transportation at first was on foot, horseback or horse and buggy. In 1916, Rev. Dahl purchased his first car, a Model T Ford from George Mortensen, which he often found more difficult to handle than horses. The Dahl family were the only pastor’s family to occupy this parsonage as it was sold after their deaths. Pastor Dahl died in July 1918 and Mrs. Dahl a year later. They are buried at Vangen Cemetery.

Dineen, Patrick

Patrick Dineen came to America in 1865, leaving his wife, Mary (Welch) and six children at Mertha Tidville, Wales. He worked to build the Union Pacific Railroad and saw the two golden spikes driven into the mahogany tie to celebrate the joining of the east and west. He also helped build the railroad from Sioux City to Yankton. He located on a farm eight miles east of Yankton on section 32, township 94, range 54, and sent for his wife Mary and their six children.
He got logs from a man in Nebraska in payment for working in the timber for him and started to build a cabin, but had only three sides built when his family arrived in Sioux City. So he borrowed a yoke of oxen and drove to Sioux City to meet them. They hung over the open side of the cabin until they could get it finished.

One day when Mrs. Dineen had just baked bread, the Indians came and took it all, leaving none for the family. Three more children were born in Dakota so now the family consisted of the following children: Daniel, Margarete (Mrs. Albert Aman), Timothy who died at age 14, John, Hannah, Pat, James, George and Nellie (Mrs. Tom Garvey). During the 1881 flood, the Dineens saved 16 cattle and 2 horses by sprinkling salt on the straw so they would eat. They did lose 79 head of cattle and 13 horses and part of their house. The next fall, the team which they had saved was stolen. But they started again. Patrick's first wife died and he married Mary Walsh in 1900 and in 1920, they moved to Yankton.

**Douglas, Archibald**

Archibald Douglas was born in Glasgow Scotland, the son of a Presbyterian minister. His wife, Katherine Smith Douglas was born in Ireland. Elizabeth, their daughter was born October 8, 1862 in Greenwich, Conn., also four sons: James, William Archibald Jr., and Robert. In 1870 they came to Dakota to live on a farm they had bought. This farm was 2/4 miles northwest of Gayville in section 34 of Volin Township. In 1875 daughter Elizabeth at the age of 16 taught a term of school in the Marvin district. The following year she taught a term in the Berkeley district. In 1882 she married James Newton Blackett.

**Edgerton, Reuben**

Reuben Edgerton was born at Delphi, New York in 1837. He was a dairy and general farmer there. The Edgertons wanted to leave Delphi Falls because of the heavy snowfall and cold temperatures of the New York winters. In 1881, Reuben came to Meckling to consult with Mr. C.N. Taylor, a former neighbor who had come to the Meckling area in 1864. On Mr. Taylor's advice, he purchased about 800 acres of land at $5 to $10 per acre. The land he purchased started at the Groves ditch south of Meckling and extended south to the slough. That fall, Reuben and his sons and a son-in-law, Elwood Brink, loaded five emigrant cars with livestock, machinery, and household goods and several of the men rode with the cars to feed and care for the animals.

The other men and the women and children came out later on the train. The party included Reuben and his wife, the five children: Harrison, Albert, George, Charles, Lucy (Mrs. Edwood Brink) and Esther plus a daughter-in-law, a son-in-law and Harrison's seven children. Reuben and his wife, settled on the farm which was later called the Fred Deeman farm, with their unmarried children.

HARRISON Edgerton and his wife Mary and their seven children settled on the south farm. About 1886, he sold his farm to John Lind and moved his family to the state of Washington.

ALBERT Edgerton married Lena Hollingsworth and they farmed the father's farm. They were the parents of two daughters: Gertrude and Evelyn. About 1896, Albert sold his farm to Fred Deeman and moved to Zion City, Illinois. Their daughter Evelyn lives in Phoenix, Ariz.

GEORGE CLARK Edgerton built up the farm, just south and 1/4 mile east of Meckling, the only farm still in Edgerton name. George married Anna Hollingsworth and they were the parents of five children: Mable (Mrs. George Walstead of Chicago), George, Mary, Gordon, and Glenn. Grandma Hollingsworth came from Canada to live with her daughter Anna and family after her husband died. She died in Meckling about 1897 and was buried at Buckingham, Canada. George Clark Edgerton died in 1908 and left Anna with five children, the youngest of which was two years old. Anna died at age 93 in 1954 while at her son Gordon's and her body was brought back to Vermillion to be buried beside her husband. George, Junior, married Marguerite Buckman. They had one daughter, Shirley. They operated a drug store in Gayville for some time, then moved to Rapid City where they now make their home. Mary lives on the farm near Meckling during the summer and at Chicago and Orlando, Florida in the winter. Gordon died in Pomona, California in 1968 and is buried there. Glen lives in Munster, Indiana and Orlando, Florida. Glen was married and has one son.

The Elwood Brinks (LUCY EDGERTON) built in Meckling and later bought a farm 1/4 mile north of town. Their children were Ernest, Fritz Arthur, Guy and Max, who later ran the lumber yard in Gayville.

**Erickson, Ellef (Opheim)**

Mr. and Mrs. Sampson Erickson (son of Ellef Erickson)

Ellef born in 1821 and Ingeborg, 1832 (Opheim) Erickson came to Yankton County, Dakota Territory some time between 1864-1866 from Voss, Norway. Their three oldest children born in the old country were Erick, (1858-1880); Ole (1862-1937) and Anna (Mrs. Major Inch, (1864-1938). Other children born to this family in this country were Susan Olson Delbridge, (1866-1950), Sampson, (1865-1936), Christine (Mrs. James Welby, 1872-1952), Lasina (Mrs. Henry Taylor, 1873-1953), and Ellef Ingvall (1876-1918).

The Opheim name was used for several years and eventually replaced by Erickson. The family belonged to the Vangen Lutheran Church and it is in the "Old church yard" cemetery at Mission Hill where the parents Ellef and Ingeborg are buried as well as several of the children and grandchildren. Old church records interestingly reveal confirmation dates of all the children. 160 acres of land was acquired by patent from the U.S. government on June 13, 1875. This lies 2 miles directly west of Gayville in section 10, township 93, range 54. A strip of land 100 feet wide was released to the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul Railway in 1880 for $150.

This family suffered the hardships of many early settlers, perhaps the hardest being the death of the father Ellef, Jan. 22, 1876 from pneumonia. This happened seven months after the original Erickson land was patented and six months before his youngest son Ellef was born. The mother Ingeborg remained with her eight children on the homestead, until her death in 1920.

Sampson Erickson and his wife Mathilda Welby acquired the land in 1897. Their three children who were born and raised there were Edna (Mrs. George Gyllenhaem) 1894-1934, Earl, 1895-1967, and Kenneth who presently resides in Spring Valley, Calif. In 1910 the original house burned down and they built a new 2 story house which still remains on the farm.

Earl and his wife Emma Olson later purchased the farm in 1929 from his parents Sampson and Mattie. Two sons were born to Earl and Emma: Jerry and Gale. Jerry, his wife Jen and children LaVonne, Julie and Steven live in San Diego, Calif. Gale, his wife Marie (Wilcox) and children Kevin, Lynne and Mark live nearby the original homestead. This is the 4th and 5th generations of Erickson's to have the privilege of farming this land which was obtained by hardship and sacrifice 100 years ago.
Erickson, Jens

The Jens Erickson family

Jens Erickson was born in July of 1850 in Norway. He came to Norway Township to farm and married Anna Brunick who was also born in Norway in 1857. They farmed the southwest corner of Norway Township. They had to move their home because the Missouri River was cutting away their land. Their children were: Jennie (Mrs. Severt Myron), Walter, Clara (Mrs. Martin Hanson), Julius, Marie (Mrs. Adolph Hansen), Carl and Ray. Carl Erickson and Mrs. Adolph Hansen are the only two children living. Carl is in a nursing home at Beatrice, Nebraska. Marie lives north of Vermillion.

Jens’ brother, Bernard, who was born in Norway in 1855, lived near the Jens’ Ericksons and their daughter Amanda has lived in Vermillion since the Missouri threatened to take her house in the 1950’s. Their other living daughter Alma (Mrs. Chris Anderson) is in a nursing home in Alcester. There were three sons: Carl, Julian and John.

Fairley, Lydia (Grimm) Cowman

The James Fairley family

Lydia Grimm (1824-1894) married twice. Her first husband Henry Cowman died. Later she married William Fairley. Little is known of either. Four of her Cowman children grew to adulthood. Steve, Mary Jane (Mrs. Ottison) and John and Henry who were in the Union Army. Henry was fatally wounded at Gettysburg. In 1866 the family migrated to Runnells, Iowa and spent 2 years with Lydia’s sisters. In 1868 Lydia and children came to Gayville, South Dakota. Lydia homesteaded where Vern Fairley now lives. John where William Fairley lives and Steve where Barnes had his first alfalfa mill. Two of her Fairley children lived to adulthood, Effie (1859-1918) and James (1864-1929). Jon’s wife died young and Lydia helped him raise his children Will, Ed and Myrtle (Mrs. George McElwain). They lived at different times in 2 dugouts on Lydias place, and apparently part of the time on John’s place. While there, a prairie fire swept in from the west. A man living with them went to save the horses from a barn built of hay and died in the attempt. Lydia lost several children in a short time from consumption (or TB).

Lydia and the children herded Fargo cattle for part of the calves. The October 1880 blizzard drove the cattle south east to the Vermillion river. Many died by going over the river bank. That and the flood of 1881 wiped them out and they returned to Runnells for two years. Lydia received compensation for Henry’s death and they returned and used the money to build, in 1884, the house where Vern now lives. James married Nora Stevens in 1891. Lydia died and was buried in Mission Hill Cemetery. A stone ‘log’ was used as her marker, typifying her great love of trees. She planted many of them. John, Effie and James and Nora are buried in the same plot.

Fargo, Sylvester

Mr. and Mrs. James Fargo, (son of Sylvester Fargo)

Sylvester Fargo and Sarah Congdon were married in New York on April 11, 1855. Four of their children were born there: Charles, 1857; Mary, 1858; Frank, 1860; and Ella, 1862. The Fargoes joined the James S. Foster Colony of one hundred families and started for Dakota Territory in April, 1864. They traveled as far as Marshalltown by train. From there, they went by ox team and covered wagon, arriving in Dakota in June. Joel Fargo was born October 1, 1864 in Yankton. Sylvester served in the first territorial legislature. In 1868 Sylvester took a homestead claim in Clay County. Their sixth child, James S. Fargo, was born in 1868 in a log cabin. In 1871, Carrie was born, but died as an infant. The old stage road went past the homestead and many Indians stopped and enjoyed Sarah’s Johnny cakes and sorghum molasses. Many times the braces rolled in their blankets and slept “thick as flies” on the floor while the family slept in the loft.

The Fargoes hired some of the young Danish and Norweginan immigrants to help with the farming and Sylvester started freighting to Deadwood in 1876 with 18 yoke of oxen hitched to 5 wagons. Sarah put up butter in one hundred pound firkins in brine and garden produce and had it loaded on a boat at Yankton to be shipped to Pierre. Sylvester, after delivering his first load would return to Pierre and pick up the second load from the steamboat. He quit freighting when the railroad reached the Hills. The Fargo’s built their farm home in 1880. They brought cottonwood saplings from the banks of the Missouri and planted around the farmstead. Sarah took great pride in winning prizes at county and state fairs on fancy work, baking, gardening. She even won prizes at the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1893. Sylvester died in 1900 and Sarah in 1916. They were buried in the Yankton Cemetery.

James S. Fargo, the only child of the Sylvester Fargo’s to remain in the community, was born in 1868 and lived his entire life on the old farmstead. Jim and Louise Mahacek were married in 1891 by Reverend Y. R. Oaks of the Methodist Church at Gayville. Dolly had come to Dakota from St. Louis, Mo. as a young woman. She and her husband were active members of the Gayville Methodist Church for over half a century. Their children were: Albert, Etta (Mrs. Jess Spyr), Edith (Mrs. Melvin Mortensen), Mark, 1901-1972, Ida 1904-1969 (Mrs. Leonard Feldman), Ruth, 1908-1974 (Mrs. Evor John), Charles and Stanley. They were all reared and educated in this community. Jim was a long time merchant of Gayville proprietor of the Farmer’s Store. Two of the Fargo sons, Charles and Stanley are still residents of this community. Charles married Edna Schueler and they have one daughter. Mark farmed in this community until he retired several years ago. He married Lucille Hazen and they have six children: Beulah (Mrs. Don Anderson); Mary (Mrs. Nels A. Jensen); Eunice (Mrs. Russell Hanson); Lois R. (Mrs. Alec Solberg); Judith (Mrs. Tom Ingalls) and John M. Fargo.
Mr. Fastrup was born in Jutland, Denmark on June 1st, 1853. He was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran faith at his birthplace. He was selected by Count Danneskjold from the cavalry to be his personal valet for four years. On November 2, 1882, he was united in marriage to Ane Marie Nielsen. To this union were born 11 children, three of whom were born in Denmark. The Fastrups came to the United States in 1887, Chris in July and Ane and their three children two months later. Della was a baby of 6 months. They lived 11 years on the bottom, on a farm in section 22. In the winter of 1888 when the blizzard hit, Mr. Fastrup was away from home. Ane burned the straw from their bed ticks to keep the house warm. After the straw was gone, she wrapped the children in blankets and put them on the oven door to keep them from freezing. The Fastrups later moved to Irene. Several of the inhabitants of the Sunset home at Irene are children of the Chris Fastrups.

Freng, Christian J.

Christian Freng was born in Ringsaker in 1844 and is a son of John and Berthe (Olson) Pederson, and came to America and Dakota Territory in 1869. Mr. Freng married Lene, daughter of Hans and Kjerete (Larson) Hanson of Norway. Shortly after their marriage, Mr. Freng and wife took up residence on a farm in section 13, township 94. In 1876 they purchased a farm in section 28 of township 94, range 54. Christian and Lene were the parents of seven children: Berthe (1870-1871); Berthe (1871-1876); Christine (1873); Johannes (1875-1875); Johan (1877); Ole (1879); Peder (1882).

A grandson, Oscar, now lives on the old homestead.

Garvey, Edward

Edward (1815-1896) and Bridget (Sharlock) Garvey were married in Canada and came to the Gayville community with their family in 1875 from De Kalb, Illinois. They settled on the farm one mile south and three miles west of Gayville, in section 16 where Keith and Lee Lane now live. They were the parents of 13 children. Of these children, Thomas and Catherine (Mrs. James Stuance) remained in the area. Thomas (1858-1944) married Mary Ellen Dineen (1873-1924). In 1889 he bought the farm 1 mile south and two and three quarters miles west of Gayville where Charles Cowman now lives. There were 12 children born to this family: George, Chester, Marie (Mrs. Henry Ryken), James Madeleine (Mrs. Harry Nelson), Roy, Margaret (Mrs. Ray Perry), Daniel, Frances (Mrs. Harold Wentworth), Clifford and Mildred (Mrs. Jack Balfany). Eleven of the children attended Dewey No. 6. The last three children finished school at Welby District 19 when Thomas bought a farm along the James River west of Mission Hill. All twelve of the Garvey children lived within 15 miles of each other.

George Garvey, oldest son of Thomas, was born in 1890. He married Annie Nelson, daughter of Niels Nelson in 1913. They had one son, Ernest, born in 1915 and Annie passed away in 1915. Ernest was accidently killed in 1945 while working on a car, after coming home from serving in World War II. In 1930, George moved to Gayville, and worked in Cowman's Grocery store. In 1921, George married Mary Dalager. They had five children: Ralph Gene, Patty (Mrs. James Anderson), Virginia (Mrs. Donald Nelson), Sharon Lee (deceased), and Judi (Mrs. Charles Cowman). George was an elevator operator for 30 years. He worked at the Mortenson garage and then went into the garage business for himself and then went back to managing the Hart Bartlett Elevator until he retired. George died in 1970 and was buried in the Gayville Cemetery. R. Gene has been postmaster for 26 years. He is married to Viola Heer and they have two children, Ricky and Joan.

Chester Garvey (1892-1963) lived and farmed in the Gayville community all his life. He moved onto his father's farm one mile west and one and three-fourths miles south of Gayville and bought it in 1939. He married Caroline Lee (daughter of the Knute Loe) in 1921. They had two children: Rennie (Mrs. Harry Batcheller) and Thomas Edward (named for his grandfather). Thomas remained in the community and farmed his father's farm. He married Judith Thomsen and their children are Tommy, Debora and Carolin. Tom died in a tractor accident in July 1967. Judy and the children still live on the farm. Chester and Tom are buried in the Gayville Cemetery.


James Garvey (1898-1965). In 1916 George and James farmed 2/4 miles west of Gayville. He married Dorothea Thomas in 1923 and they had two children: Bette (Mrs. Lloyd Slowe) and James Jr. (Bill). Bill was killed in a car accident. Jim operated cafes in Yankton and was operator of Garvey's Gun Shop.

Roy Garvey (1902-1963) married Helen Rempp and they farmed for a time 2/4 miles west of Gayville and also with his brother. He lived in Yankton but was always a farmer.


Clifford Garvey (1910) married Eleanor Holtz in 1940 and they farmed his father's farm in Mission Hill Township by the James River until his death in 1959. They had two children Leslie and Patrick.

Gjetle, Ole (Oleson)

Ole (Olson) Jellety, (son of Ole (Olson) Gjetle)

Ole and Torbjor Oleson came to Dakota Territory in 1859 and settled in section 34 of Meckling Township. The next spring, March 2, 1860, their son Ole, Jr. was born, the first white child to be born in Clay County.

The Olesons took the name Gjetle because of the name Oleson was so common. Another child of the Gjetle's was Bertha, born in 1862. She married Bert Bottofson.

Ole Gjetle, Jr. anglicized the name to Jellety and had it changed official. He married and farmed his father's homestead. The family consisted of Oscar, Hans, Therese and Lee. The Jelletys contributed land from their farm for the Meckling Cemetery. All of the Jelletys have left the community and the farm is now owned by Alfred Kaebel.

Ole Jellety (Jellety) Jr. was born March 2, 1860, the first white child to be born to white settlers, it is claimed. His parents were among the very early Norwegians who settled in and around Norway Township. They had taken a claim in section 34 of Meckling Township. They took the name Gjetle because the name Oleson was so common. Then it was Anglicized to Jellety which was used quite generally later. Ole Jellety gave the land for the Meckling Cemetery. Ole moved to Oregon and there are no descendants of the family in this area.
in 1886, Ella (Mrs. Oscar Olson) born in 1891 and Agnes (Mrs. Louis Svatos) born in 1894. Their land was taken by the river. Green died in 1915 and the widow and children moved into Gayville. During the flood of 1916, Jesse and James used their boat to look for people stranded by the flood. James and Jesse were both GI’s in WWI. James was badly wounded and spent a great deal of time in veteran’s hospitals after he returned. Their mother died in 1918. When he was able, James played the violin for dances in the community. He married Frances Lane and they moved to California where James died in 1957. Jesse, who never married died in 1961.

Halvorson, Bjorn

Bjorn and Anna Halvorson came to America about 1864 and lived in Wisconsin for a time and then in 1868, when Knut was two years old, they came to Dakota. They homesteaded in Clay County, Meckling Township, section 29 where the Harvey Albers now live. Other children of the Bjorn Halvorsons were Gilbert, Tom, Julia (Mrs. Louis Berquist), Anna (Mrs. Nels Larson), Mary (Mrs. Peter N. Rask), and Betsy (Mrs. Monse Bloom). Gilbert was three years old when they came to Wisconsin from Norway.

GILBERT Halvorson married Minnie Mueller in 1896. Shortly after his marriage he purchased a farm north of Gayville in section 36 of Volin Township where they lived for thirty four years. They took a child to raise, Albert Bruyer who took the name of Halvorson. They retired to Gayville where they built the house that Ray Hanson now owns. Gilbert lived to the age of 91 and died in 1952. Minnie had died in 1939.

TOM Halvorson married Tina Bruyer (Albert’s mother) and they had three children: Bert, Ruth and Francis. The mother returned to Denmark and Tom raised his three children alone. They have all moved to California. Tom’s family lived where the Mille’s live now.

MARTIN Halvorson remained in the community. He never married.

KNUT Halvorson married Bertha Larson and they homesteaded where Gene Larson farms, then moved to north of Gayville where they lived with the Gilbert Halvorsons and farmed the land which lay next to theirs which Knut had bought. In 1911 they bought the house in Gayville just north of Gilberts’ house and which is now occupied by their daughter Alverda. Alverda their only living child (several babies died when very young) married Robert Brendsdal who died in 1965. They had no children. Knut died in Dec. of 1939 and Bertha in July, 1940.

Hansen, Andrew C.

Andrew C. Hansen was born in Schleswig, Denmark, October 7, 1888. Catherine M. Aasmussen was born in Ouara, Denmark, January 7, 1882. They were married in Denmark October 24, 1888. In 1889, Andrew came to the United States to a cousin of his who had established a home in Norway, Township. The first year, he and a neighbor worked as laborers for Mike Olland. Their wages were $50 a month. In 1890, his wife and baby daughter arrived. He bought a piece of land near the Missouri River. The farm consisted of 100 acres. The land was mostly timber land and had to be cleared of trees and brush before he could plant a crop. There
were eight daughters and one son born to them. The son Hans died in infancy. The daughters were Botilla (Mrs. Carl Strecher), Marie (Mrs. Anton Staum), Anna (Mrs. John Erickson), Motha (Mrs. August Kryger), Christina (Mrs. Oscar Danielson), Margaret (Mrs. Walter Kaaberle), Alice (Mrs. Jens Lund). They made a living feeding hogs and milking cows. The house was a two room dwelling which was home for a family of ten until 1905 when a new home was built. Then came the flood of 1907. The whole farm was surrounded by water except the house and barn which were built on higher ground. All the fences, grain in storage, chickens, hogs and cattle were lost. The family of ten, a hired man and a neighbor family of four, who were without a home, lived in the same house two weeks until the water receded. There was no telephone or any connection with the rest of the world. The eight daughters attended and received their education in Lincoln school No. 12. They were members of the Bergen Lutheran Church. Andrew died Jan. 17, 1920. Catherina died May 4, 1942. They are buried in the family plot at Bergen Evergreen Cemetery. The old home place is now owned by Hans Miller of Yankton County, and is located in section 21 of Norway Township.

Hansen, Henning

Henning Hansen family

Henning J. Hansen was born on January 28, 1858 in Myola, Denmark and came to America in 1877. He came to the home of Christian Hansen, his uncle who lived where the Joe Kronaizis now live. He worked for a time on the railroad. Tina Christensen was born May 14, 1861 in Varde, Denmark and came to America in 1881, and did housework to earn her living. She spent some time in Minneapolis.

Henning and Tina were married Nov. 17, 1883. They moved onto a farm in Clay County, Norway Township, section 8. Nine children were born to them: Martin and Theodore (deceased), Harry (who lives in Yankton); Anna (Mrs. Philip Anderson); Christina (Mrs. Chris Hansen); Sena (Mrs. Julius Erickson); Hilda (Mrs. Einer Jepsen); Olga (Mrs. Chris Snyder); and Alma (Mrs. Frank Hall).

In 1913, Mr. and Mrs. Henning Hansen, Mr. and Mrs. Soren Mortensen, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Lund and Jens Junker took a trip to Denmark aboard the S. S. Emperor, Hamburg American Line, largest in the world at that time.

Grandchildren of the Henning Hansens living in this area are: Marion Henning Hansen of Gayville; Charlotte Snyder White; of Volin; Lavern Jepsen of Gayville and Alva Jepsen of Meckling. Alva lives on the homestead of the Henning Hansens.

Hansen, Leopold

Leopold Hansen came to Gayville from Denmark at the age of 17 in April 1883. He made the trip alone and came to the home of his cousin Mrs. Charles Johnson. While on the trip he got on the wrong train at Chicago and came to Canton. He met a man there who could speak Norwegian and he helped to get to Gayville and also bought him a meal. When he arrived in Gayville there was no one there to meet him but John Aseth arranged for him to get a ride with two young ladies. They were Nellie Shepherdson and Elizabeth Lane. They took him within a short distance of the place and he walked the rest of the way. It was hard for him as he could not speak to them or understand them but he said they laughed and smiled every time they looked at him. He said he must have looked funny to them in his high boots and old fashioned cap. He also told about when he came to Johnson's, his first worry was to get rid of what he had left of his lunch. (At that time they had to furnish their own food on the ship) so he buried it behind the barn not knowing what else to do with it. He also worked for Hans and Peter Smith and Soren Mortensen till March 20, 1889 when he married Marie Jessen and had his own home. He lived various places buying and selling several times. He once owned the Clifford Miller and Oscar Danielson farms, and he cleared several acres of timber land for Elling Myron. From 1900 till 1904 he lived in Nebraska till he bought a farm from Marius Miller at Meckling. He lived there until his death in 1940. His wife died in 1947.

They had a family of 6 children of whom 5 live near Gayville. Their son Herman passed away in 1960, the rest are Mrs. Clara Christensen, Mrs. Nellie Johansen, Mrs. Freda Christensen, Mrs. Elda Fallon and Otto Hansen who still lives on the home place.

Hanson, Aamond

The Aamond Hanson family

Aamond Hanson was born on a farm in Eide Hardanger, Norway on October 29, 1827. He served 5 years in the Norwegian army as a bugler and drummer. At the age of 29 in the year 1856, he immigrated to America and first settled in Winneshiek County, Iowa near Highlandville where he bought a farm. Four years later in the year of 1860, he left for Dakota Territory and settled on a piece of ground 5 miles west of what is now Vermillion.

About 2 years later his cabin was burned by the Indians and he was driven out. In January, 1862, he enlisted in the Union Army as the company bugler attached to the Dakota Cavalry Company A under Captian Miner. He saw extensive Indian campaigns and battles throughout the Dakota Territory. While serving with the Cavalry, he helped build the first school house located in Vermillion. At the close of the war, he was discharged on May 9, 1865 with mustering out pay of $129.20 plus 1 horse and equipment. Later, he served a short time with Brakketts Battalion which fought against small Indian uprisings throughout the Dakota Territory.

He returned to Clay County to take up his homestead. He farmed here until his death. He was elected to the Dakota Territorial Legislature for the three terms of 1866-67 and 1867-68. While in the legislature, he introduced the law that forbid the sale of liquor on election day.

On November 15, 1870, Aamond married Julia Olson, daughter of Elling and Anne Olson. She was born March 2, 1852 in
Hanson, Christian

Christian Hanson was born in 1835 in Oslo, Norway. He came to America and became a United States citizen on Nov. 7, 1876. In 1874, Christian and Olina Anderson were married. They received Homestead Certificate No. 891 signed by Rutherford B. Hayes on Dec. 10, 1880, which gave them title to the ¼ of SE¼ of Section 6 and the W½ of SW¼ of section 5 in township 93 of Clay County containing 160 acres. On August 1875, Christian bought a Beloit Reaper for $37.50. In January of 1884, he paid $14.86 in taxes on his land. In 1888, he paid $20.14 and in 1916 he paid $74.69. In July, 1893, he bought a five foot Jones mower for $45.00. Christian and Olina had five sons: Henry, Alfred, Carl, Anton and Martin.

HENRY Hanson, the oldest son farmed in the Westville and Volin areas for a few years, before returning to the home place which had become two farm homes. His brother Alfred was farming the west ½ of SW¼ of section 5. Of the Henry Hanson five children, the two youngest, Lyle and Ray were born in the same house where their father was born. Henry retired from farming during the depression and moved into Gayville and lived there the rest of their lives. Ray is the only one of the Henry Hanson family left in the community. He married Stella Peterson and they have lived in Gayville all their married lives. Their children are Ray Jr., Grace and Stephanie.

ALFRED, born in 1885, and his wife Ingeborg had three sons and a daughter: Clifford, Leonard, Ernest, and Clara (Mrs. Wilmer Rye). They farmed a part of their father’s homestead. Clifford and Leonard never married and they moved to a farm south of Gayville about one mile, the old Frank Hardin place. Ingeborg died in 1962 and Alfred and his son Ernest continued to farm the home place. Clifford died in 1968, and his father died in 1969.

Hills, Nikolai M.

Mr. N.M. Hills was a pioneer educator of Gayville. He taught the 1878 and 1879 school terms. Someone else taught in 1880 but from 1881 until the end of 1886-1887 school term, Mr. Hills was the teacher, a total of seven years. From 1886 until 1893, he was county superintendent. In a letter from Margaret Hills, a granddaughter, she tells about her grandparents:

Nikolas M. Hills and Sarah C. Hardin were married in Granville, Ohio, Sept. 16, 1874. They left right away for Dakota Territory and homesteaded north of town. They lived there until the flood of 1881. Frank Hardin, Mrs. Hill's brother, helped them waterproof a wagon box so they could make their way into town to safety. They put blankets in it to keep the children warm. There were the Hardins, Mrs. O'Shaughnessy, Lila and her aunt. Hills quite a while to get to town as there was so much ice. Mrs. Hill's relatives lived in a two-story house about where Peter Rask lived so they moved in with them. After the flood, they moved their house into Gayville. It is the first house on the south side of Brown Street when you come into town. Roy was born there in 1891 and that is the reason that the Hill's well was dug in July. (This well was destroyed several years ago)

Mr. Hills tried to teach whatever the children needed to learn: the beginners learned the fundamentals of reading and writing.
But there were older children, some almost grown, who wanted to learn algebra and Latin and he taught these, too. One story about his methods: Regina Mortensen when a beginner could never remember the letter D. Mr. Hills called her up to him, sat her on his knee and started to sing "Diddle de Diddle de". Regina said she never forgot the letter after that!

**Holcomb, Mrs. Richard**

Mrs. Richard Holcomb and daughter Cora

The Holcombs lived in section 2, T92-R54, where the Howard Dringmans now live. Richard Holcomb was presumably the Dick Holcomb who carried the mail for a time between Gayville and St. Helena. At the time the school was just east of the present Dringman home site. The school teacher boarded and roomed with the Holcombs.

The Holcombs had six children: George (1867-1906), Ida (1870-1901), Charles (1872-1954), Nellie (1874-1983), Eddie (1878-1878) and Cora (1879-1895). Mrs. Holcomb was left with five children under 12 years of age to raise when her husband and the school teacher ran away together in a covered wagon, headed for western Nebraska. George, the oldest son had to help his mother provide for the family. They had a very hard time. Daughter Nellie drowned in the Missouri River west of where Marvin Rykens live now. Several children were digging potatoes and she went too near the river—a chunk of dirt crumbled and took her with it. Bernard Loosmore was one of the older children and he ran for help to his home, where Marie Rykens lives now. Bernard said that the last he saw of Nellie was her long black hair floating on the water, she was never found. Cora died at age 16 of consumption. Charlie moved to Martin. Daughter Ida married Linn Van Osdel. George moved near Yankton and worked for the Gurney Nursery for many years. Lucinda died in 1933.

**Hollingsworth Family**

The William Hollingsworths had come to Buckingham, Canada from England after their marriage. They were the parents of seven daughters and four sons. In 1883, several of these children came to the Meckling area: Lena (Mrs. Albert Edgerton), Fanny (Mrs. James Dolan), Elizabeth (Mrs. William Doile), Anna (Mrs. George C. Edgerton), Thomas and James.

THOMAS Hollingsworth married Myrtle Williams, a widow with two daughters: Leona and Vera. Thomas and Myrtle were the parents of Leo, Ada (Mrs. Lyle Abild), Fayie (Mrs. Sidney Abild) and Thomas, Junior. The family farmed north of Meckling where Leo and his family continue to live. Thomas, Sr. died in 1960 at the age of 83 and is buried in the Vermillion Cemetery. Thomas, Junior, is a minister in Hollywood, California.

JAMES Hollingsworth studied medicine at the University in Vermillion and at McGill University in Canada. He practiced medicine for 50 years at Avon, South Dakota.

**Howard, Livingston**

Livingston Howard came to Dakota in the early 70's. He taught at the Morey School (later called the Howard School). In 1876 he taught the Gayville school. Then he married a fellow school-teacher, Priscilla Morey and operated the Morey farm.

Anna Howard, daughter of the Livingston Howards, married William Magorian. Mr. Howard was chairman of the board of county commissioners in 1905 when the Yankton courthouse was built.

**Inch, Thomas, Joseph, Major**

THOMAS INCH, born in 1836 was the first of the Inch family to come to America from Ireland. He came in 1856. Two sisters, Katherine (Mrs. Joseph West), Sarah (Mrs. William Fuller), Joseph and Major followed. They lived in the eastern part of the United States for some years. Thomas came to Dakota in 1868 and filed on 160 acres in section 9, township 53, range 54. He built a frame house fourteen by twenty feet. He began to improve his farm with buildings and a grove of trees. He worked for a time on the country place of a Major DeWitt, near Yankton, as he had done gardening and landscaping while in the east.

In 1881, the water stood 4½ feet deep in his cabin. He and his brothers lived for four weeks in the upper part of the granary. He lost all but 30 of his 200 head of livestock.

JOSEPH INCH homesteaded next to his brother's place. During the flood, he traveled from his brothers granary to his place to feed his livestock. He and his brothers built a raft to go from the granary to Thomas' cabin for supplies but he had gone back to his place several times just leaping from one ice cake to the next. On one occasion, he was thrown into the icy water when a chunk of ice overturned. He was drowned, the only life known to be lost in this flood.

MAJOR INCH, born in 1850, came to Dakota in 1877 and bought a tract of land adjoining his brothers. Major married Anna Erickson in 1881 and they had five children: Thomas, Mary Ann (Dowling), John, Merrill and William. They made their home with Major's brother, Thomas Inch. Major died in November of 1920. Thomas, Major's eldest son was the father of two children: Kurtz and Doris (Crecelius). Kurtz died in World War II and Doris lives in Arizona. William and his wife Minnie were the parents of four children: Harriet (Mrs. Verne Williams), Marie (Mrs. Lee Engeet), William, Jr. who lives at Freeport, Illinois and Mildred (Mrs. Buell Eggers). John Inch and his wife Elsie were the parents of one son, John, Jr., who lives at Sunland, California. Merrill is the only living child of Major Inch and he lives in California, too.

**Iversen, Aslak**

Aslak Iversen, the son of Ivar Aslaksson Vambheim and Dordei Trondsdatter Lekve, was born in Ulvig, Norway, July 12, 1827. He was the eldest of five children.

Aslak was married to Guro Samsonsdatter Haasheim in the spring of 1854 and came to America the same year and settled at Cambridge, Wisconsin. Later they moved to the neighborhood of Stoughton, Wisconsin, in Dane County, where they lived for a short time.

This marriage was blessed with one son, Iver A. Iversen, jr., born March 20, 1856. Mrs. Iversen passed away in 1856 when their son was but three days old. Aslak's sister cared for the child until Aslak married Briton Mikelson in 1857. This marriage was blessed with two sons, Lars A. Iversen, born September 13, 1858, in Dane County, Wisconsin, and Jacob G. Iversen, born May 6, 1861 in Clay County, South Dakota.

When rumors were circulated that Dakota Territory was to be opened for settlement to the white people, Aslak's longing for a home of his own overtook him. He, with several others, started out for the Plains of Dakota, going by way of Dubuque, Waterloo and Fort Dodge to Sioux City, Iowa. This point was reached after a period of thirty-seven days. With no roads or bridges, and with rivers and swamps to cross, they were compelled to hitch six oxen to a wagon and a man to each wheel, to cross forty rods of swamp. They would then, have to unhitch and go back for another wagon, making six trips in all.

Reaching Sioux City, Iowa, they crossed the Missouri River into Nebraska. After great hardships, they came to North Ben and St. James on the Nebraska side. Here they found the colony of their acquaintance who had come the year before, to see and admire the big forests and rich flat land in the Dakota but which was owned by the Indians and not to be opened for settlement before 1861. They prepared temporary homes and provided for
Aslak Iverson was very active in all church activities as well as affairs of the county and state. He was one of the leaders in his community. He held several political and church offices. He served one term as State Representative. The authentic data covering the first years of settlers is meager in this immediate territory. However, if there is one characteristic more outstanding than any other in the lives of these early pioneers who blazed the trail of Christian civilization over these prairies, it is their deep piety and desire to preserve the spiritual heritage brought with them from their homeland. The home was a very important institution among these early pioneers, but scarcely less important was that of a church home. Their faith in God as a Protector and Provider was firm and comforting. Though far from their homeland, they were still God’s children. They had faith in the church, so after completing their homes, their thoughts turned to establishing a church. Previous to this, they held their devotion in the various homes. They would read and discuss the Bible and sing hymns from the hymn book which they had brought with them from Norway. In 1864 a meeting was held to organize a congregation. At this meeting, Aslak Iverson was chosen as one of the trustees. It was not until 1871 that a start was made to build a church by taking up subscriptions toward the building. In 1871, he was elected building superintendent. Owing to crop failures and hard times, it took twenty years to complete this edifice. This seems a long time viewed in the light of present conditions, but few of the present generation can fully appreciate or measure the struggles and hardships of the early pioneers. This building was threatened by prairie fire but was saved by Aslak Iverson who pulled away the burning steps from the building.

The winter of 1880 and 1881 was severe upon these pioneers. A great blizzard came upon them in October. The snow fell to a great depth and was blown by a violent wind until the open sheds and buildings were filled. Stock was driven away or covered by drifts. This snow did not go off until late April, when in a single day it was converted into a great sea of water. Without warning the water came upon them, carrying great sheets of ice, crushing and moving buildings as it swept along, driving the occupants into attic and upon roof tops. Their homes and earthly possessions were lost, most of them left with only the bare and exposed. Faith and courage they started anew to rebuild their homes, and through the years became prosperous and wealthy.

Aslak Iverson continued to live on the homestead until his death, December 3, 1889. He was laid to rest by the side of his parents Ivar and Dorde Aslakson Lekve in the Meckling Lutheran Cemetery. The homestead was taken over by Lars A. Iverson and Jacob G. Iverson, and later became the homes of Clarence, James and Ernest Iverson, Arthur Iverson and Jacob Iverson Jr.

Aslak Iverson’s second wife, Brita Mikelson, died March 16, 1906, at the age of 81. She was survived by two sons, Lars A. Iverson and Mikel Mikelson and a step-son, Iver A. Iverson Jr. Jacob Iverson preceded his mother in death.

Blessed be the memory of these pioneers who blazed the trail and underwent the hardships to make a life for their children and their children’s children who are descendants of Aslak Iverson.

Jasper, Soren

Soren Jasperson was born in Denmark in 1857. Mary Damm born there in 1849. They were married in 1878. They were from the Schleswig-Holstein area which was taken by the Germans. Not wanting to serve in their army, they immigrated to the Gayville area in 1878. They came to her uncle, Hans Damm who owned land south of town. They farmed there and also, Soren worked on the railroad and steamboats on the Missouri.

In 1880, the Peter Jasperson’s came to America to be near
their son Soren. Their only other child, Magdalene, had died at age 17 in 1872 and was buried in the "old country". As was the custom of their homeland, they lived in town but went to the country to farm. They bought a house in Gayville and rented land north of town. Peter was quite a horseman and could often be seen racing his horse "Put" through the streets of Gayville. He died in 1918 and his wife in 1918. They are buried in the Gayville Cemetery.

During the flood of 1881, Soren's family went to the neighbor's to the north on the place where Johnie Jepsen now lives. Some time later Soren bought land southeast of Meckling where John Taylor now lives. The children were: Theodore, Peter, Hans, George, Dorthea (Mrs. Ole Bottolfson, Jr.) and Lena (Mrs. Ole T. Olson), all of whom lived most of their lives around Vermillion. Mary Jepsen died in 1936 and Soren in 1947. They are buried at the Meckling Cemetery.

THEODORE JASPERSON married Rosie Wilson and they had one child who grew to adulthood, Orville. Orville married Alice Clark and they have two adopted children.

PETER JASPERSON died in a gun accident.

HANS JASPERSON married Viola Taylor and they had no children but they adopted two children.

GEORGE JASPERSON married but they had no children.

**Jepsen Brothers**

CARL JEPSEN, son of Hans and Ane (Anderson) Jepsen, came to South Dakota in 1912, to his father's sister's home, Christ and Matilda (Jepsen) Nelsen. He was from Aaree, Denmark. Carl married Matilda Hansen in 1918 and they moved to Bowbells, North Dakota.

MAGNUS, brother of Carl Jepsen, came in the spring of 1914. He farmed in the area and in 1924, married Anna Anderson, daughter of Susanna and Martin Anderson. They farmed in Norway Township until they retired. Their children are Gerald and Sanna (Mrs. Marlowe Iverson). Gerald married Marianne Brandwein and they live on the Anderson home place. Their children are Kathleen, Susan, Scott and Robin.

HANS JEPSEN, twin brother of Magnus, came in the fall of 1914. In 1918, he married Emma Boyles and they farmed in section 6 of Norway Township and they are the parents of three children: Mildred (Mrs. L.R. Davis), Wayne and Johnie. Wayne married Glennis Bye and they have two sons, Craig and Gene. Wayne purchased the Hartin farm in section 23 of Gayville Township and he and his sons farm there. Eugene married Lori Lee and they live nearby and have one son, Gary. Johnie married Marjorie Burwitz and they have two daughters, Christine and Cynthia. They farm the Jepsen home place in Norway Twp.

EINER JEPSEN came with his brother Hans in 1914. He married Hilda Hansen in 1921 and they farmed where the Joe Kronai's farm was later and on the Henning Hansen homestead which they bought. They were the parents of LaVerne, Harvey, Matilda (Mrs. Wayne Iverson), Beverly (Mrs. Warren Johnson) and Alva. Einer died in 1941. LaVerne married Darlene (Larson) and they have four daughters: Diane (Mrs. Laverne), Joan (Mrs. Paul Larson), Jeanette (Mrs. Roger Hauge) and Cheryl (Mrs. Douglas Peterson). LaVerne runs a service station in Gayville. Harvey married Virginia Clark and they have one daughter, Sharon. They live in Gunnison, Colorado. Alva married Lavonne Heier and they live on the old Henning Hanson homestead. They have a daughter Margo and a son, Richard. Both Einer and his wife have passed away. The Jepsen brothers have a brother and sister still in Denmark.

**Jessen, Jess**

Jess Jessen came to America from Denmark in 1882. He worked in the east for a while and then sent for his family which consisted of his wife and 5 children. They all came to Gayville in March 1883. His oldest son, 15 years old, worked for Soren Mortensen and his oldest daughter Marie, 12 years old, worked for Hans Smith. Her job was to take care of Louis who was 4 months old. Jess was a musician and gave violin and flute lessons in the neighborhood. He played for all the dances in the community. He and his family lived near Gayville till in 1903 when he and his son homesteaded at Bowbells, North Dakota. Later his family moved there but some of his older daughters stayed in Gayville. They were Maria (Mrs. Leopold Hansen) and Anna (Mrs. Oscar Lang) and Sophy (Mrs. Henry Kahn). Jess Jessen died at Powells Lake, North Dakota in 1938 at the age of 88. His wife passed away in 1928.

**Jessen, Hans**

Hans A. Jessen and his wife Elsie, a daughter Mary (Mrs. Ole J. Olsen) and one son Nis of Aaree, Denmark arrived in Gayville in the fall of 1888. Also in the party was Miss Matilda Jepsen (Mrs. Christ Nelsen). Two sons Jes and Jens had come over in the spring of 1888. They came to the Soren Mortensens south of Gayville.

They built a home in Gayville which is a part of the home owned by Mrs. Charles Diebold. Hans was a painter by trade. They later moved to the Norway community. Hans was a charter member of the cemetery association for the Bergen cemetery.

Jens and Jess worked for various farmers in the Gayville area, later farming for themselves. Nis died at the age of 15 in 1891 and is buried in the Danish Cemetery. Hans and Elsie both died in 1920 and were buried in the Danish cemetery. They were both in their 80th year.

Mary worked near Lodi (north of Volin), before she was married and rode her bicycle back and forth to work.

**Johnson, Calle**

Mr. and Mrs. Calle Johnson

Calle Johnson, born in 1843, left Denmark in the 1860's for America where he helped build the transcontinental railroad.
Then he returned to Denmark. On April 12, 1870, he and Marie Hostrup who was born in Hostrup, Denmark in 1842 and had worked as a geesgirl and dairy maid, joined a small party of friends to leave Copenhagen on the emigrant ship “Ocean Queen” and at the end of nineteen days arrived in New York. Marie stayed in New York and worked until her lost baggage arrived and Calle continued on to Dakota to purchase a relinquishment on a quarter of land in section 32 of Meckling Township. They were married by Reverend Emil Christensen and the next morning, Marie took stock of her new home: one kettle, one frying pan and a coffee pot, two cups, two plates, two knives and forks, a stove, a bed, a rough table with a bench. Their next home was also log, but larger with a lean-to for a bedroom. It also had a board floor and a shingle roof.

In this house ten of their eleven children were born. Eight of these children reached adulthood. Hans, Peter, Ella, Katherine, Mary (Sorenson) Helena (Hansen) and Christina (Hvistedahl). This little house still stands, but the family moved into a fine brick house built in 1882 made from brick fired on their own farm. This is where the youngest child was born.

In 1914 Calle passed away and was buried in the Danish Cemetery. Marie stayed on the farm until she moved to Vermillion in 1930. She died in 1940 at the age of 98. In 1933 the brick house was destroyed by fire and grandson Carl Hansen and his wife Mary and daughter Dorothy moved back to the old log house until they could get their modern brick home built. Carl is the son of Pastor Iver Hansen and his wife Helga and had a sister Della (Olson) and two brothers Phil and Milton. Carl and Mary had one daughter Dorothy (Sollenberger).

**Johnson, Iver (Markvold)**

Mr. and Mrs. Iver Markvold was born in 1827 at Hollengaarden, Gulkbrandalen, Norway. His mother died when he was eight years old. His stepmother was his mother's cousin. At age 12, he started spending his winters as a fisherman and in the 27 winters he spent fishing he acquired several fishing boats. He bought his father's farm and in 1864 at Stennes Kirke, Sannesjøen, he married Christina Jondatter who was born at Bjønag, Helgeland, Norway in 1836.

The family left Norway by sailboat in 1866— it took six weeks to cross the Atlantic. They went first to West Salem, Wisconsin. From LaCrosse, Wisconsin, they traveled by steamboat down the Mississippi and then up the Missouri to Sioux City. They settled on section 10 of Meckling Township next to the Yankton County line. When they first arrived, mail came once a month by horseback and postage on a letter to Norway was 50¢.

There were seven children in the family, all of whom have passed on. One daughter Jensine Karine, was buried in a coffin made by a local coffin maker, who stained the wood boxes black and lined them with unbleached muslin. Wild flowers were gathered for funerals when they could be found.

In America, Iver spent his spare time reading. Among his reading materials were Latin and Norwegian law books brought from Norway. Christina wrote letters for the “Newcomer” neighbors who could not write. She also made their clothing, spun wool, knitted stockings, and crocheted scarfs.

Iver died in 1881 at Gayville and was buried there. Christina died in 1910 at the home of her daughter Mollie Pederson in Wisconsin and was buried in Whitehall, Wisconsin beside her daughter Jorgine (Jennie) Lanning.

One of the sons of Iver and Christina, Edwin C. Johnson was married to Emma Segard in 1897. They first lived east of Gayville on Fargo land, then in 1904, they moved to the home in Section 35 of Volin where one of their sons, Milton, now lives. In addition to farming, Edwin was a hog buyer for Morrell’s for many years. Five sons were born to Edwin and Emma: Clifford, Ernest, Lloyd, Milton and Leslie. Emma Johnson died in 1933 at age 52 and Edwin, in 1939 at age 83. They are buried at Vangen Cemetery, near Mission Hill.

Clifford Johnson married Jennie Walraven of Gayville and they farmed northwest of Mission Hill and had two daughters. Dorothy (Mrs. Burnell Johnson) of the Gayville area has two children, Steve and LeAnn; Donna (Mrs. James Snow of Pierre). Clifford passed away in 1965 and Jennie now lives in Gayville.

Ernest married Janice Jeglum of Gayville. Their children were Warren, Joy, and Gayle.

Lloyd married Helen Gasper of Bridgewater, S.Dak., and they farm near Volin. They have two sons: Jim and Bob.

Loyd married Evelyn Smith of Gayville and they have two sons: Dean, who is married to Priscilla Arete of Austin, Minn., lives at Logansport, Indiana and has two sons, Bruce and Bobby and Don who married Joan Page of Winona, Minnesota and they live at Dandridge.

Leslie married Jeanne Keller of Viborg. They had two children: Keller and Brenda.

**Johnson, Martin**

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson came from Norway in 1868 and after spending one year in Wisconsin, came to Dakota and settled on a farm in section 1 of Gayville Township. This farm had been homesteaded by his uncle, Torkel Johnson of Norway a year earlier.

Martin and his uncle Torkel built the log house which still stands. Martin also helped build the Milwaukee Railroad from Sioux City to Yankton. During the flood of 1881, they went by boat to the Bluffs as their house had three feet of water. They returned when the water subsided. They also weathered the blizzard of 1888.

The Martin Johnsons had six children: Bert, Josephine (Mrs. James Snow), Ragna who married and moved to Irene, Mary and Julia who never married, and John who was killed in a gun accident when he was a teenager. Bert never married so there was no one to carry on the Johnson name. The only descendents in the area are the children and grandchildren of the James Snows. Julia is the only child of the Martin Johnsons still living. She lives in Volin at the age of 91.

**Johnson, Peter (Vinji)**

Peri W. Vinji immigrated to the United States in early 1880, came to Chicago, then to Wisconsin. He was a harness maker by trade. In Wisconsin, he married Juri (Julia) Sampson, daughter of Ingiri Sampson. He left for Dakota Territory with an ox team, homesteading two miles west of where the town called Gayville now stands.

He anglicized his surname to Johnson and became known as Peter W. Johnson. A couple of years later, he went back to Wisconsin for his wife. They lived in a little sod house. Peter cut wild hay and stacked it in a V-shaped pile for protection against the cold winter. The hay at that time grew six to eight feet high. Later the Indians burned the hay. As time went on, he made friends with the Indians. They were often startled when they looked up to see Indian's faces peering through the window at them. When Inger, their first child was just a baby with blonde hair, a visiting Indian chief walked into their home one day and took her from the mother, seated himself and put a pair of beautiful beaded moccasins on the
bodies feet. Then he rose with the child and walked to the door as though he were taking the baby with him. The mother was petrified, but when he reached the door, he turned and with a smile, put the child in its mother's arms.

The Johnson's were instrumental in establishing the Inch School. When Vangen Lutheran Church was built in 1869, Peter Johnson drove his ox team to Omaha, Nebraska and brought back the organ which still is a part of the old Vangen Church. The trip took two months.

When the railroad came through, they often had hobo's come to their home. The Johnsons always fed them and Peter would talk with them. He felt sympathetic because when he came to this country, he had been pushed off a train because he had no money to pay his fare. He lay unconscious for several hours from the fall. He vowed he would never mistreat anyone that way. Many stayed for short or long periods of time and then just disappeared.

The old log house on the Johnson farm was torn down not too long ago, but the old well still runs. Their last house, which is also gone now, was large and beautiful and he called it "Castle Hill." It was built on a knoll which saved it from the flood.

Children of the Peder Johnson family were: Inga (who never married), Lena (Mrs. George Peterson), Minda (who was adopted. She married Pat Lan). Nela; Edward and Josie (Mrs. Iver Byrkeland). Nels Johnson's children were: Neva (Mrs. Robert Grimm); Agatha (Mrs. Lyle Hammer); Beulah (Mrs. Kenneth Erickson); Stanley, Inger (Mrs. John Miller); Esther (Mrs. J. H. Martensen) and Edward. None of the Johnsons remain in this community, but Edward, son of Nels, and his family live at Mission Hill.

Junker, Nissen

Mr. and Mrs. Nissen Junker

Nissen Junker was born in Denmark in 1820. He married Karen Jensdatter, born in 1812 and they were the parents of four children: Ole, born in 1848, Caroline, 1851, Jens, 1854 and Anna Marie, 1857. Nissen, Karen and three of their children left Kolsnop, Denmark on June 2, 1870 and came by ship to New York City. They arrived in Sioux City on July 7, loaded their belongings into a wagon and started the last leg of their journey into Dakota, made most unpleasant by the extreme heat and the mosquitoes. They were met by their eldest son, Ole who had come the year before. They made their temporary home in someone's barn and started to build their own home. They started to attend church at Bergen and in August, their daughter Anna Marie was confirmed there. Several months later, the Junkers moved a half mile to their newly built home in section 6 of Norway Township where they stayed the rest of their life. The next ten years saw three of their children married and in homes of their own. Then in 1881, as the Junkers were making preparations for the wedding of their son Jens, their home was surrounded by swirling flood waters. About a month later, Jens and Anna went by boat to Vermillion to be married.

The Junkers joined the Trinity (Danish) Church when that congregation was organized and were active in building the Church in 1893. Jens Nissen Junker died in 1898 and Karen in 1899. Both are buried in the Trinity Lutheran Cemetery.

Ole N. Junker, eldest son of Nissen Junker married Johanna Severson (1859) about 1877 and spent the remainder of his life on a farm several miles east of his parents. They had a son who died as an infant and three daughters: Anna Caroline (1878), Cora (1880) and Alvina (1882). Only one, Anna Caroline, farmed in the area. She and her husband, Francis Trusty, moved back to Norway Township with their daughter Jessie and farmed the home place. Francis died in 1941 and Anna in 1965 and they were buried in the Danish Cemetery. Jessie and her husband, Hardis Peterson, live in Gayville.

JENS N. JUNKER met Anna Logan, who had been born in Ohio in 1856, moved with her parents to Waterloo, Iowa, helped care for her brothers and sisters after her mother died and then attended college at Grinnell, Iowa. After teaching several terms in Iowa, she came to Dakota to teach. Jens and Anna had planned to be married in March, 1881, but the flood kept them marooned. Finally, in April, 1881, they made their way in row boats to Vermillion and were married there. Jens and Anna lived on the home place in section 6 of Norway Township with Nissen and Karen until their death. There were six children: Hannah (Mrs. Soren Sorensen) born in 1882, Louise (Anderson) born in 1884, Helene (Mrs. Niels Jensen) in 1885; Nissen in 1887; Minnie (Mrs. Harold Jensen) in 1891; and Arthur, in 1894. Jens died in 1918 and Anna, in 1931. They are both buried in the Danish Cemetery. J. Nissen Junker, Jr. married Edna Picket and they had one adopted daughter, Janice married Don Mangold, lives in Yankton and has three children. Nissen died in 1925 and Edna in 1927. They are buried in the Danish Cemetery. Arthur W. Junker, after farming for a while, moved into Gayville and had a bulk gasoline delivery business. He married Erma Milbrath and they had three sons: Dale, Jack and Don. Jack died as a small boy and Don and Dale moved out of the community. Grandchildren of the Jens N. Junkers who still live in the community are: John, Arthur and Paul Jensen, Harold and Arnold Jensen, Mrs. Joe Kronaiizl, and Mrs. Chester Peterson.

Kaeberle, Louis

L.F. Kaeberle came to Meckling the year of 1894 from Schaller, Iowa with his brother-in-law, Ludwig Ahrendt. They each bought land, Mr. Kaeberle’s being the NW 1/4 of section 27. The next spring they moved to South Dakota with wagons pulled by teams of horses. This was during the dry years—it was so dry, only 10 cows could be pastured on a 50 acre plot of grassland. But in a few years, conditions were better.

Louis Kaeberle’s parents, Frederick and Martha Kaeberle came from Germany after their marriage to the Amana Colonies in Iowa and worked there for two years, then bought 40 acres of land along the river near Norway, Iowa where they had a truck garden. They sold their garden produce in the city of Cedar Rapids and nearby towns. They never came to South Dakota.

Louis Kaeberle married Antonetta "Nellie" Pederson in 1899 and the ceremony was performed by Pastor Dahl. They had one daughter, Myrtle (Mrs. Beuel Burton), and two sons, Walter and Alfred. Mr. Kaeberle died in 1960 and is buried in the Meckling Cemetery.

WALTER KAEBERLE married Margaret Hansen and they have three children: Merlin, Arley (Mrs. Jason Phillips) and Donna June. They live in Akron, Iowa.

ALFRED KAEBERLE married Florence Beaty and they have three daughters: Kathleen (Mrs. Milo Apland); Karen (Mrs. Ron Sonsiegaard); and Celine. The Kaeberle’s own and live on the former Ole Gjetle farm, in section 34 of Meckling Township.

Klatt, Moritz

Early in the month of June, 1890, Moritz and Minnie Klatt, together with their three children Lena, age 11, William, age 7 and Moritz, Jr., just a year and a half and the maternal grandmother, Auguste Wunderlich, left their home on the Island of Rugen, just off the mainland of Germany, their destination, America. They
were eager, anxious and filled with hope and expectations for a new and better life with relatives in South Dakota. Mr. Klatt had served as a German soldier on patrol duty for many years and this had kept him away from his home and family much of the time.

They set sail, aboard a not too rugged vessel that carried freight as well as passengers. The boat was small with three decks. The animals were housed below, passengers on the second deck and on nice days the children played in the sun on the top deck, and here, too, Mr. Klatt furnished accordion music for dancing and evening entertainment. Sickness plagued one and all, severe storms caused great concern but finally after seventeen long and tiresome days and nights of travel on the Atlantic Ocean, the journey came to an end and the ship sailed into New York Harbor and docked at "Castle Garden" which is now better known as "Ellis Island". Then began the trials of the customs investigation. Luggage was opened and scattered, as officers searched for articles that required a payment of duty before being allowed into the United States. Not being able to speak nor understand English created a problem.

At last the ordeal was over and the already weary travelers boarded a train for the final trek to South Dakota. One week later, they arrived at Gayville and were greeted by relatives and were given temporary housing in the William Andre home. Gertrude Andre and Minnie Klatt were sisters and Auguste Wunderlich was the mother of them both. The families were happy to be together and thankful the long journey had at last ended.

Mr. Klatt found work as a farm laborer employed first by Mr. Andre at a salary of $15 per month. Later the Klatt family moved to a home of their own which was owned by John Dougherty and is now owned by Clayton Hanson. The next month brought them to a larger farm. Then after more years of hard work, the family purchased 160 acres from Breta Erickson. They moved into a log house and in 1916 a new home was built but the original log structure still remains to serve as a landmark. Here Moritz and Minnie lived out the rest of their life. Moritz born in 1859, died in 1945; Minnie, born in 1860, died in 1933.

Lena Klatt married Louis Langfeldt and they set up a business in Gayville. Two sons were born to them: Raymond, now deceased and Leo, who resides at Mankato, Minnesota. Lena died in 1948.

WILLIAM KLATT farmed at home, first to help his father, then in partnership with his brother Moritz. Later in life he married Lucy Wadsworth. No children were born to this union. Lucy makes her home on 4th floor of Sacred Heart Hospital, Yankton, since the death of her husband in 1969.

MORITZ KLATT, Jr. married Mabel Weis and they lived on the Klatt farm until 1933 and then they moved to their own farm, (The Hans Hanson farm) in the Meckling vicinity. They have since retired and now reside in Gayville. They have one daughter, Frances, Mrs. Barton Peterson of Meckling. Moritz Jr., born in 1890 is 92 years old at the time of this writing.

Kolberg, Jens

Jens and Agnethe Kolberg came to America with their two children, Peter J. born in 1851 and Bertha (Mrs. Rasmus Peterson) from Norway. They first settled in Dane County, Wisconsin but remained there only a short time. Maria and Lars was born in Wisconsin. They next went to Jackson County where Jens and Peter worked in a sawmill until they earned $300 in wages which they were never paid. From here they went to Dubuque, Iowa, for treatment of Jens' eyes. In 1868, they came to Yankton County, Dakota, and purchased the farm on which the father died, in 1888. This farm was located on section 4 & 5 of Gayville Township.

PETER KOLBERG who was 17 years of age when his parents brought their family to Dakota, went to work for the Couolson Steamship line, sailing on the Josephine, the Nellie Peck and the Far West at various times. He worked for Commodore Couolson for 12 years. He also helped build the Dakota Southern Railroad from Sioux City to Yankton. Then in 1886, he and Carrie Evanson were married in Sioux City. (Carrie was born in Norway in 1849 and was a sister of Mrs. Evan Segard.) They were the parents of the following children: Jorgen, Minnie (deceased), Pauline and Alice (Mrs. Robert Kneeland).

Jorgen married Gertrude Diekstra of Le Mars, Iowa and they

children are Robert and Karen (Mrs. Henry Markus) of Greeley, Colo. Jorgen was among the group of early pioneers who were honored at a special ceremony and given a plaque during Governor Farrar's administration. Robert married Anna Marie Guirink of Orange City, Iowa and they have three children: Leisa, Laura and Daniel. Bob lives on the homestead to which the Kolberg family came when they arrived in Dakota.

Kryger, Anders J.

Anders J. Kryger was born in Schleswig, Denmark on Sept. 13, 1857. Kjestine M. Lund was born in Schleswig, Denmark, August 25, 1859. Anders came to the United States in 1880 to the home of a friend who had settled in Pennsylvania. In 1881, Kjestine came to the United States and they were married in Sheffield, Pennsylvania, on June 13, 1881. Two years later, they came westward and originally settled in Yankton County, where he worked as a laborer for Charley Johnson, Jens Junker and others. In 1884 he came to Norway Township and bought a farm three miles south of Meckling, S.Dak. He later bought another farm, the old John Genderson farm east of Norway School. This farm had the original log house which was the home of several families during the flood of 1881.

They survived through two other floods—1907, when the whole territory south of Meckling was surrounded by water and another flood in 1916, equally disastrous.

There were five sons and one daughter in the family: John, Peder, Hans, August, Anna (Mrs. Carl Beck) and Theodor. After Anders passed away, the land was divided between his six children. The old home place was later sold to Hans Jaspers and is now the home of Benjamin Taylor. The children attended and were educated in the Norwegian School. The Krygers were members of Trinity Lutheran Church, Vermillion. Anders died May 4, 1932. Kjestine died January 17, 1926. They are buried on the family plot on Bluff View Cemetery east of Vermillion.

JOHN KRYGER married Daisy Pond and they had ten children, only one of whom lives in this area. Andrew lost his wife in a train accident, has two daughters and lives south of Vermillion.

PEDE KRYGER married Elise Peterson and they had one daughter, Marie, (Mrs. Vernon McKee)

HANS KRYGER married Sena Jorgenson and they had three children: Mattie (Mrs. Asbjorn Nordhagen), Elmer, Mamie (Mrs. Wallace Trankel).

AUGUST KRYGER married Metha Hansen and they had one
son, Marion, who is married to Lois Bottolfson and they have two children, Galen and Rebecca. August died January 25, 1971. Mrs. Kryger lives on the home place. Marion, who lives about a mile northwest of the home place, farms his mother's farm.

THEODORE KRYGER married Opal Varing.

Larson, Bjorn

Bjorn and Anna Larson were emigrants from the Sogn area of Norway. They crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a sailboat, up the St. Lawrence River and through the Great Lakes, landing in Wisconsin. Here they purchased a team of oxen and a wagon and continued on to Dakota, where they took up a homestead, on the higher land near where Volin now is.

Once while Bjorn was away from the homestead, the Indians frightened his wife Anna and their children so they hid in the grass. Then the Indians destroyed their home by fire. It is said that the Indians took four year old Nels with them but returned him to his family, unharmed, several days later. At any rate Bjorn didn’t find any of his family for several days.

Bjorn took his family to land near the present site of Vorhees and took up a homestead there. Here Lars B. Larson was born May 17, 1866. Again they were frightened by Indians and went to Sioux City for a short time. (This was probably the Indian scare during the summer of 1862). When they returned to Dakota, Bjorn settled on section 33 of Meckling township on what is known as the Alva Larson farm.

Children of the Bjorn Larsons were Nels Lars, Ragnild (Mrs. Iver Iversen), Mary (Albers Peterson), Chris, Bertha (Mrs. Knut Halvorson), Jennie (Allings) and Eric.

LARS B. (Louis) Larson married Anna Reitan and to this union were born: John, Bernt, Edore (Ed), Adolph, William, Louis, Tillie (Mrs. Lincolm Rye) and Alma (Mrs. Earl Hill). After his first wife’s death, Lars married Mrs. Andrea Ward. To this union were born: Martha (Mrs. John H. Olson), Inga (Mrs. Albert Young) and Vern. The Lars Larsons lived on section 30, Meckling Township, where Lewis Larson now lives. In 1914, they moved to Gayville. Andrea had come to the United States in 1874, when she was three years old, with her widowed mother Inga Christenson. Andrea had two sons by her first marriage: Elmer and Arthur. Lars died in 1931 and Andrea in 1948. They are buried in the Meckling (Jetoey) Cemetery.

John Larson married Tillie Peterson and they had two daughters, Hazel and Adaline. They live near Meckling. Bernt Larson married Nora Watson and they had two children: Marcella (Mrs. Selvin Lien) and Earl. Both Mrs. Lien and Earl live in Arizona.

Edore or Ed Larson married Minnie Peterson and their children are: Mildred (Townsend), Eileen (Mrs. Eddie Mettanz), Frances (Mrs. Kermit Ryken), Shirley and Betty (Mrs. Nels Nelson)

Adolph Larson married Clara Lysne and their children were: Louis and Gladys (Mrs. Charles Cook).

William married Ethel Peterson and farmed west of Meckling.

Their children were Harvey, Lucille (Mrs. Howard Frank) Donna (Mrs. Roger Voigt), Judy (Mrs. Neil McGilvery). Harvey married Georgia Clark and they have one child, William. Their children are William, Gail (Mrs. Dan Brown), Randy and Milton.

Louis, Jr. died as an infant. Vern Larson married Mrs. Blanche Lutzen and they live in Meckling.

NELS Larson, son of Bjorn and his wife Anna, were the parents of George, Harris (Harry), Bertha (Mrs. John Peterson), Tillie (Mrs. Hans Rask) and a baby who died, Irene. They purchased the farm on section 30 of Meckling Township from the government in 1890 and lived there until their son George returned from his service in WW I. George married Ivy Melville and they had two sons: Melville and Alvin. George and Ivy operated the farm until George’s death in 1965. Ivy remained there until her death in 1972. The farm is now owned by Mel and his wife Betty Johnson. They have three children: Jim, Mary and Russell. Alvin Larson was married to Florence Peterson and their children are Larry, Linda, Tom and Mike. Alvin is now married to Marilyn Johnson and they live in Vermillion.

Harry Larson married Leona Hall, the adopted daughter of Bert Bottolfson. They owned a farm in section 35, Meckling Township. They were the parents of three children: Rollo, Orrene (Mrs. Alexander Leschuck) and Thelma (Mrs. John M. Paulson). Rollo married Clara Lunde and their children are Claron, Allan, and Allana (Mrs. Dennis O’Keefe). They live in California.

CHRIS Larson and his wife Sophia were the parents of three children: Alva, Helen and Evelyn (Mrs. Bob Foss). Alva and his wife were the parents of Paul and Sandra. Paul is married to Joan Jepsen and they have a son and a daughter. They live across the road from Alva’s.

ERIC Larson never married.

Larson, Mathias

Son of Lars Bourre (1808-1874) and Else Seegard (1867) of Norway, Mathias Larson was born in 1834. He came with his parents to Wisconsin, U.S.A. in 1850 where they remained. He came with a team of oxen, wagon, one cow and a heifer to Union County, Dakota in 1861. Mathias enlisted in Company B. First Dakota Cavalry and was honorably discharged in 1865. He took a claim in Gayville Township and married Lene Kviagard in 1869. Their children were: Edward, 1870-1878; Ingvald 1871-1872; Emil 1873; Mathilde, 1875; Alma, 1877; Ella, 1880; Clara 1882-1882. They were members of the Lutheran Church. Mathilde married Martin Zack who lived near the Larsons.

Larson, Ole B.

Ole B. Larson, born in 1846 came from Dane County, Wisconsin, and arrived in Dakota August 31, 1859. He met Carrie Christine Aagard in Vangamillen where she and a sister Laura (Mrs. Sam Culberson) worked in the Chandler Hotel. Ole hailed mail between Yankton and Sioux City three times a week on horseback. He and Carrie were married and farmed on the farm where Ole S. Larson now lives in section 30 of Meckling Township. Their children were Lena (Mrs. Jim Evans), Mary (Mrs. Roy Walsh), Emma (Mrs. Nickolas), Adelia (Mrs. Lewis Hilburn), Ella (Mrs. Martin Manley) Ole S., Carrie (Mrs. Irwin), and Clark, and three who died as children. Ole and Clark are the only ones left and they both farm in the Gayville-Meckling area.

OLE S. LARSON married Clara Brunk in 1922 and farmed several places and now is back on the old Larson Homestead. Their children are: Kenneth Eugene; Donald and Robert. Gene married
Mr. and Mrs. Ole B. Larson

Arlene Pierisol and they have two sons, Steve and Charles "Chuck". Chuck is married to Margaret Snyder. Donald never married and he died in 1970. Robert married and had five children: Christie, David, Kent, Timmy and Bobby. They live in Sioux City where Robert is a music instructor in the schools.

CLARK LARSON married Clarissa Myron and they farmed in the Gayville Community and they had five children: Darlene (Mrs. LaVerne Jepsen), Stanley “Toby”, Betty (Mrs. Leland Nelson), Verlin, Marilyn (Mrs. Virgil Kaiser). Stanley had two children by his first marriage: Clark and Debra. He is now married to Miriam Williams and they run a supper club at Meckling with his brother Verlin. Verlin is married to Margaret Boevar and they have no children. They also farm.

Lee, Knude S.

Knude was born in Norway 1844, son of Stark and Berthe Olson. Mr. Olson emigrated with his family to the United States in 1867 to Benion County, Iowa where his wife died that year. He came to Yankton county and lived here until his death in 1897. Knude, eldest of 12 children, came with his parents and brothers and sisters and located his first claim in Twp. 94 and in a short time sold it and moved to his home in Twp. 93. He married Bertha Emison in 1870. They had one child—Sturk. Bertha died in 1887. He married Matilda Michelson in 1888. Their children were Caroline (Mrs. Chester Garvey), Selma, Oskar.

Loosemore, W. H.

Mr. Loosemore came with his parents from England to Yankton in 1875. In 1880 he bought a farm in section 27, township 93, range 54. He farmed and did carpenter work until 1886 when he bought a farm in section 15, township 93. He was married to Margaret Garvey in Kane County, Illinois in 1868. Their children were: May, 1870; Fannie, 1872, Bernard, 1875, Margaret, 1876, Sarah, 1879 and John, 1881.

Bernard married Andrea Mortensen. They lived in Minneapolis for many years.

Lund, Peter N.

Peter Lund, born in 1850 in Denmark, came to Dakota Territory about 1870 and went to work for Sylvester Fargo for $20 a month. Here he met Caroline Junker who was also working for the Fargo's. In the winter of 1872-1873, Peter and Caroline's brother, Ole crossed the Missouri River with horses and sled to cut wood for railroad ties to build the railroad from Sioux City to Yankton. Peter also helped to build the first store in Gayville. He filed on a homestead about three miles south and one mile west of Wakonda. He built a log cabin on his land and on March 6, 1874, he and Caroline were married and started housekeeping on their homestead. After three years of drought and grasshoppers and homesickness, the Lunds moved back to the "bottom" near the Junkers. They paid $8

The Peter J. Lund family

an acre for their farm. They had six children: Niels (1875-1931), Cora (1879-1910), Sema (1888-1948), Jens (1886-1969), Mattie (1892), Ingebore (1882-82). Caroline died in 1927 and Peter died in 1938. They are buried in the Danish.

The only one of the Lund children still living, Mattie, makes her home with a daughter in Woodland, California. But there are three grandsons and their families living in this area, Hans, Carl and Mark Miller.

Lyman, W. P.

William Lyman was born in 1833, but we know very little about him until he came down the Missouri in June 1857 in a ferry boat which he had built while in the service of the Army at Fort Randall. With him was his wife Wenona, daughter of Chief Strike-the-REE and their children, Martha, John and Ella. He built a ferry house and trading post on the east bank of the James River and spent the winter operating his ferry. He was the first white man to make his home in Yankton County, but he and his family soon moved west to the Black Hills.

Magorian, William and Anna

William Magorian was born in Cherry County, Illinois in 1877. He came here with his parents, brothers Charles and John and a sister Anna by steamboat. It was in 1881 right after the flood and the trains were not running. They settled on a farm which is now known as the Martin Zack farm. William's father was a musician and they had a family band which played for dances in and around Gayville and St. Helena, Nebraska.

William married Anna Howard, August 28, 1904 at the Howard residence by Reverend Bernard Mattson. The couple took the east bound train for Sioux City for their honeymoon and on September 10, returned to the farm. The Magorians were the parents of Howard, Ellen (deceased), Ray and Ruth (Mrs. Melvin Iverson). William Magorian passed away at Sacred Heart Hospital at the age of 85 and Anna died at the age of 90.

HOWARD Magorian lives on a farm purchased from Fred Drake and right next to the old Morey and Howard place. Howard married Alice Mettil and they have two daughters: Arlys (Scheidel) and Mary Ellen (Allen). RAY Magorian married Marie Westlund and they have the following children: Lyle, Joanne (Mrs. Ronnie Driessen), Eileen (Mrs.
Vic Hamburg), Janice (Mrs. Ross Shuff), Margaret (Mrs. Victor Steepnagel), Linda (Mrs. Mike Luken) and her twin Lois (Mrs. Tom Tuttle). Another daughter, Mary died in a sledding accident. Lyle married Kay Roberts and they have two sons to carry on the Magorien name: Lyle, Jr. and Jim. Ray and Marie live on the old Morey and Howard farm on the Jim River.

**Marks, Julius**

Herman Marks was born in 1883 while his parents Julius and Augusta were on board ship in the harbor of Hoboken, New Jersey; thus he was a ward of the ship and a naturalized citizen. The family came to Le Mars, Iowa and then to Gordon Nebraska. The crops were poor and in 1902 they moved to South Dakota in the Gayville vicinity. Their family consisted of Charles J. and Anna Marie and Herman when they moved onto the B.G. Wright farm. Lena, Tillie, Minnie and Frank were born at Gayville. They moved to the Heideman farm; now owned by Jorgen Kolberg.

HERMAN married Nellie C. Reeder and they lived for 10 years on a farm south of Gayville which they purchased and they later bought and moved to the Burtness farm 1½ miles east of Gayville. They moved into Yankton to retire. Herman died in 1950 and Nellie died in 1968. They were buried in the Yankton Cemetery and there are no descendants.

ANNA moved with her mother to Gayville in 1924 where she resided until her death in 1957. Anna learned the dressmaking trade and did some practical nursing. A daughter of her sister Minnie, Virginia McKelvie Rye was brought up by Anna after she was 9 years old and Virginia was a comfort and blessing to her in the last years of her life.

FRANK lived in the Gayville area for some years, was married and had a family. After his wife died, he and his children moved west of Yankton.

**McMaster, William**

William McMaster was the youngest of six children born to Samuel and Sarah McMaster. They had come as pioneers to Ticonic, Iowa, a small town near Sioux City, from the state of Maine. William graduated from high school in Sioux City in 1896 and from Beloit College in Wisconsin in 1899. In 1901, he came to Gayville to serve as cashier of a bank which had just been started in a small frame building west of the present bank building. In 1902, William was united in marriage to Harriet Russell of Cooperstown, New York. They made their home in Gayville and here William, Jr. and Dorothy were born. As the bank became established, a new brick building was put up south of the B and A store, and the business was moved into a more fitting home.

In 1901, Mr. McMaster was elected state representative and then served two terms in the state senate. Before the children started to school, the McMasters moved to Yankton. William continued his political career by serving two terms as lieutenant governor and two terms as Governor, followed by a term in the United States Senate. He retired from political life in 1933 and took a position as president of the Dixon National Bank of Dixon, Illinois. William died in 1968 and his wife died later that year. They were both 91 years old when they died. Their children live in North Carolina and California. They were honored at the 1969 Hay Day.

**Mettet, Peter**

Peter Mettitt came to America from Molde, Norway at the age of 16 years. He landed in Canada and worked in lumber camps to earn enough money to travel to Sioux City where his brother Andrew lived. His brother had come two years earlier. Peter took a job with the railroad where Andrew worked. Still working for the railroad, he came to Gayville.

He left his job with the railroad to work for James Fairly on the farm and later worked for the Bagstad and Ansen Company. While there he attended a house warming party at the Henry Albert home where he met Clara Olson, the daughter of John and Johanna Olson, who lived on a farm one mile east of Gayville. On March 12, 1902, they were married at the Lutheran parsonage by Rev. P.H. Dahl and lived in a house across the street from Regina Mortensen’s house.

Later they moved to a small house north of the Julius Berkeleys and rented his farm for two years and then rented the Bruce Wright farm for eight years. In 1913 they purchased their own farm 3 miles SW of Gayville. They also purchased their first Buick car from George Mortensen. In 1934, they spent 3 months visiting Peter’s birthplace in Norway. They retired in 1943 and moved to Yankton. Peter Mettitt passed away March 21, 1966. Clara resides at the Nancy Home. The Mettits were the parents of three daughters: Alice (Mrs. Howard Magorien), Hazel (Mrs. Oscar Brosz) and Eileen (Mrs. John Gregg).

**Morey, Milton**

The Moreys came to America before the American Revolution. Milton born in 1810 was trained to be a tanner. He and his family had emigrated from New York to Wisconsin, then to
Minnesota in 1866 where he ran a sawmill. In 1861, Milton's stepdaughter (Eliza's daughter by her first marriage) Ann Elizabeth Ribby, married a widower, Dr. Abram Van Osdel. Dr. Van Osdel and Ann Elizabeth had come to Dakota Territory in 1862 but because of the Indian scare, didn't homestead until the next year. The Moreys came in 1866 and settled on section 7 of township 90-54 on the east bank of the James River with their three daughters and one son.

Their eldest daughter Priscilla married Livingston Howard, Perilla married George Woodsworth and Permilla married William Van Osdel. Daniel never married. The Moreys also raised Eliza's daughter Ann Van Osdel's two children, Kate and Linn Van Osdel, after the death of their parents.

Milton often walked the 13 mile round trip to Yankton and back. During the 1881 flood, there were 23 people living in the upper floor of the granary on the Milton Morey farm. That same building still stands on the Ray Mangiorn farm. Milton Morey died at the age of 76 in 1886 and his wife died three years later at age 73. Daniel F. Morey died at the home of his sister, Mrs. W.T. Van Osdel at the age of 43, in 1903. He had farmed two miles south of Gayville.

Mortensen, Soren

Soren Mortensen was born in Denmark, April 21st, 1846, the son of Morten C. (1817) and Mary (1818) (Sorensen) Peterson. He was reared on a farm and received state education. In 1869, he emigrated to the United States and settled on Long Island in New York. In 1874, he and Metha Larson were married. They came to Dakota Territory in 1876 and purchased the farm which is still owned by the family. Their family consisted of ten children: George, born in 1875, Martin, in 1879, Matilda (Mrs. Harden Rask) 1881, Bena (Mrs. Harry Shepherdson) 1883, Andrea (Mrs. Bernard Loosmore) 1885, Christian, 1888, Edward, 1889, Mable (Mrs. Glow Brown) 1893 and Melvin, 1896, and a child who died as an infant. On June 19th, 1896, his wife Metha died. After two unsuccessful marriages, Soren married Matha Scott, a cousin of his first wife, whom he left to mourn him at his death in March 1913. Soren was buried in the Danish Cemetery beside his first wife.

GEORGE Mortensen married Regina Olson and was in business in Gayville most of his life. He had a garage and sold Ford cars. Regina at age 99 in 1972 still lives in the house they built.

MARTIN Mortensen married Effie Boyles. They had two children: Milton and Dorothy (Mrs. Martin Schamber). They farmed in Yankton County for a time, then moved to a ranch near Chamberlain. Martin died in 1953 and his wife in 1963. They are buried in the Danish Cemetery.

CHRISTIAN married Hazel Van Osdel, daughter of Linn Van Osdel, in 1913 and they farmed right next to the old Sorensen home farm. Their family consisted of Maxine (Mrs. Howard Fairley) and Donald. Donald married Lilian Knapp of Yankton and they live in California and have three children. They are buried in the Mission Hill Cemetery.

EDWARD Mortensen remained on the old home place. He married Agnes Olson and they were the parents of four children: Laverne of Tracy, Minnesota, Bernice (Mrs. Austin Ball), Marion (Mrs. Carlo Peterson) and Karen (Mrs. John Witt). None of Edward's children remain in this area. Edward died in 1967 and is buried in the Danish Cemetery. His widow, Agnes, lives in Gayville.

MELVIN Mortensen married Edith Fargo and they were the parents of two children: Marlys (Mrs. John Say) and James. Melvin and Edith moved from their sister Bena's farm to a farm of their own in 1946. They are west of the James River near Yankton.

Myron, Syvert

Syvert Myron was born near Bergan, Norway and came to the United States in 1851 with his family and settled in Wisconsin. With 16 other Norwegians, they migrated to Nebraska in 1868. Their son Helge, eight years of age and his older brother, Hans, walked all the way from Wisconsin to Nebraska driving the cattle and following the wagons which conveyed their household goods and were drawn by oxen. They were six weeks on the way, as it was spring and traveling conditions were not good.

On August 17, 1859, the Syvert family crossed the Missouri River. Their cabin may have been built the past winter, because it was considered the first log cabin built by a settler in Dakota. It was built 90 rods north of where the Bergan Church now stands. A part of it is said to be in the state museum in Pierre.

After the 1862 flood, Syvert paid $5.00 for a farm on section 33 of Meckling Township. A discouraged easterner wanted to go back east. Syvert later moved to this farm where the Bob Barta's now live. Syvert Myron and his wife were the parents of the following children: Hans, Helge, Syvert, Jr., Ira, Tuxton, Halvor and one daughter who was married to Amos Lewis. Most of the family left Dakota and moved to Washington.

HANS MYRON, the oldest son of the Syvert Myrons, lived west of the Bergan Church in section 15 of Norway Township. After the C.N. Taylors moved to Meckling and started a post office there, the post office of Lincoln was located at his home from 1873-1893. Hans was later a partner in the Baggs and Anseth store. He and his wife were the parents of 14 children. They moved to Stannard, Washington with their family.

HALVOR S. MYRON (1849-1907) and Karen Erickson (1849-1907) were married and took over his father's farm in section 35 of Norway Township until after the 1863 flood. Then he built a home in section 52 which is now occupied by his grandson, Irving Han.
son. Daughter Eda was born on this farm in 1894. Their children were Severt, Oliver, Clara (Mrs. Hans Hanson), Andrew, Charley, Ralph and three children who died in infancy, and Ida (Mrs. Louis Ahrendt). Mrs. Ahrendt and Charley Myron are the only living members of this family still in Dakota. In 1907, Halvor's wife Karen died and was buried in the Meckling Cemetery. Halvor married Lena Olson and moved to Yakima, Washington in 1908. They had two sons: Bartley and Herman (died in 1971). Halvor's son Severt, born in 1873, married Jennie Erickson, daughter of Jens and Anna Erickson, April 22, 1896 in Meckling. They farmed in the Meckling area until 1938 when they moved to Lakeville, Minnesota. They were the parents of eight children: Julius, Ernest, Orville, Melvin (who passed away at age 6), Clarissa (Mrs. Clark Larson), Sylvia (Mrs. Bill Sealey), Myrtle (Mrs. J.H. Young), and Lillie (Mrs. Art Pepin). Severt passed away at the age of 76 and Jennie at the age of 91, in 1966. Severt's brothers Oliver, Andrew, Charley and Ralph never married.

HELGE MYRON, son of Severt was born in 1850, married Britta Bottolfson. They were the parents of six children: Olin, Ira, Amelia, Amy, Anna and Florence. Helge passed away in 1905 and Britta moved to Volin. Son Ira lived near the Yankton-Clark boundary and then about 1900, farmed six miles east of Volin in Spirit Mound Township. He was about four years old at the time of the 1881 flood but he remember being in the boat as they crossed the Missouri to St. James, Nebraska to safety. He remembered the mud on the floor of their home when they came back after the flood. Ira married Inez Bervin, a native of Dakota, and their children were Edward, Inez and Ira, Jr.

Ole H. Myron married Myra Snyder in 1916 and their children are: Gordon S. and Odell M. They farmed in Norway Township until they retired and moved to Vermillion. Their son Gordon farmed it for a time. Much of this land was taken by the river during the 1952 flood. Ole died in 1945 and Myra in 1968. Gordon and Odell have moved off the bottom.

Nielsen, Jens C.

Jens Nielsen, born in 1838 married Ane Kjerstine Mortensen in Denmark and they had eight children: Mette, Rasmus, Maren, Niels, Martin, Christian, Suzanne (Mrs. Marinus Anderson) and Caroline. Ane died in 1879 and Jens and his six youngest children came to America in the early eighties. They lived some years before coming to Dakota. Four of Jens' children lived in this area: Niels, Martin, Christian and Susanne. Jens Nielsen died in 1909 and was buried in the Danish Cemetery.

NIELS JENSEN' NIELSEN born in 1864 in Denmark, married Andrea Marie Anderson and bought a farm in the Gayville area. Their children were Annie (Mrs. George Garvey) born in 1892. Harry, born in 1894, Jenny, (Mrs. Alfred Jacobsen) born in 1896, Victor, in 1897, Metha (Mrs. Peter Jacobsen), 1898, and Christian, 1900. Christian fell from a horse when he was 13, resulting in his death. Harry Andrew Nelson married Madeline Garvey and they farmed the home place. They had one daughter Harriet (Mrs. Howard Dtingman). Victor married Ethel Overgaard and they lived at Centerville. Andrea died in 1910 and was buried in the Danish Cemetery and Niels died in 1944 and was buried beside her.

MARTIN L. NIELSEN came to South Dakota with his brother Chris. He bought a farm next to his brother Niels. He married Dorothea Anderson and they had three children: Anna (Mrs. Bennett Van Ooted) 1893, Melvin 1896, and Emma (Mrs. Albert Fiedler) 1898. Melvin married Viola Hoffman of Revillo, S.Dak. and they moved in with Martin and farmed the home place. Their children are Dorothy (Mrs. Orin Peterson), Maurice, and Eileen (Mrs. James Forney). Maurice served in the army during the Korean conflict, came home to farm when his father died and married Eleanor Sorenson. They live on the home place and have no children. Melvin died in 1955 and is buried in the Danish Cemetery. Viola has a home in Gayville and works as a practical nurse in Yankton. Grandmother Dorothea had passed away in 1926 and Martin in 1950. They are buried in the Danish Cemetery.

CHRISTIAN NIELSEN married Matilda Jepsen (1869) of Denmark. They lived about a mile and a half from Niels and Martin and specialized in cattle feeding. They had no children. Matilda died in 1940 and Chris in 1945 and they are both buried in the Danish Cemetery.

Nielsen, Niels

Mr. and Mrs. Anton Nelson

Niels and Mattie Marie Nielsen arrived in the United States in 1890. Niels only lived 6 months after coming to this country. Mattie lived with her son Pete at Colome until she passed away in 1918. They are buried in the Danish Cemetery. There were five children, one of which was 18 year old Anton. He worked for Soren Mortensen when he first came to this country. Later he farmed with his brother Nels Nielsen on the Julian Axeath farm. Niels also at one time ran the Gayville Hotel.

ANTON went back to Denmark about 1902 and was married to Sina Nielsen. They came back to Dakota and lived on the farm of John Turner which is now in the river. They moved from there to the Albert Smith place in 1907. Later he purchased the farm where Harlin Nielsen lives now. When he took out citizenship papers he changed his name to Nelson. Eight children were born to this union: Nels, Margaret (Mrs. Liler Jensen), Metha (Mrs. Howard Hanson), Randolph, Calira (Mrs. Axel Jensen) Sabroe, Woodrow and Lillian. Nels and Clara have passed away. Anton died in 1952 and Sina in 1954. They are buried in the Danish Cemetery.

Nels married Mary Sorenson and they had two children: Harlin and Elaine. Harlin lives on his parents' farm. There were twins sons: Edith Blair and they have twin sons, Gene and Glen.

Noll, Warren S.

Warren S. Noll was born in Grundy Center, Iowa on the 18th day of August, 1887, being a son of Thomas J. Noll and Sara J. Noll. The family later moved to Grinnell, Iowa. Mr. Noll received his education at Grinnell, graduating from Grinnell College in 1911. After leaving college he was superintendent of the Gayville Public School and while superintendent, he introduced the game of
basketball. At that time, they played games against Yankton. In 1914, he moved to a farm north of Gayville where he was township assessor for over 20 years.

On the 21st of August, 1912 was solemnized the marriage of Mr. Noll to Alma S. Aseth, who was born in Gayville on January 30, 1890, being the daughter of John O. and Christina Aseth. This union was born two daughters, Loraine and Ruth, who make their home in Sioux City.

Oleson, Ole J.

Ole Oleson came to the United States from Skade, Denmark at the age of 25 in 1896, coming to the Jorgen Nelsens at Lodi where he was employed for sometime. Later he was a drayman in Vermillion for a few years. He married Mary Jesen and after farming for a few years, bought the implement shop in Gayville in 1914 from Ole Odland. The shop is now owned by Don Kaufman.

He carried a full line of Emerson and International Harvester Co. machinery—some of the brands carried were: Brisco Automobiles, Weber and Winona Wagons, Hart Parr-Waterloo Boy, Mogul and Moline Tractors, Meadow and Sandwich Elevators, Buggies, Chalmers, Jeffrey and Maxwell cars, De Laval Separators. He sold the implement shop and took over as Standard Oil Bulk Yank dealer. One of his first deliveries was in Mission Hill area and he ran out of gas and walked into Mission Hill to get some. (He had a full load of gasoline on the truck!)

He operated an opera house on the second floor of the George Mortensen garage. The projector was run by Victor Anderson, son of Sam Anderson, and early blacksmith here. One reel was run at a time and then had to stop to put on another reel. It was in the days of silent pictures and piano music was furnished by 2 of the Oleson girls, Chrissie and Elsie; also Gladys Frances Oleson and others.

The high school affairs were held in the opera house as the school had no auditorium yet. Graduation exercises, plays, also many traveling shows were put on there, one being Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

The Oleson children are Christena, (Mrs. Clarence Burwitz), Elsie (Mrs. Howard Van Camp), Anna (Mrs. Ernest Olson), Louise (Mrs. Forrest Fisher), and Hans. The Ernest Olsons live in Gayville, Clarence Burwitz west of Gayville and Hans and his wife Mabel live near Meckling.

Ole J. Oleson died in 1931 at the age of 60. Mary died in 1951 at age 77. Both are buried in the Danish Cemetery.

Olson, Andrew

Andrew and Gaaal Olson came from Norway about 1874 or earlier. They were the parents of five children: Ole, Edward, Martin, Rebecca Olson (Ryken) and Anna (Ryken). While the children were still young, both parents passed away. The grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Erickson, helped them as they struggled to carry on. The Ericksons built the house in Gayville which was torn down to be replaced by the Harold Backman house.

Anna Bratberg, whose father Mons Bratberg had emigrated to Jameville Township, met Andrew Olson at the home of the Christian Hansons (Bratholds) who lived near the Olesons.

On Nov. 17, 1897, Ole Olson and Anna Bratberg were married. They lived on the old home place. They were the parents of eleven children: Norman, Carl, Arthur, Mabel, Gladys (Diebold), twins, Ardis and Olivia, Wilmer, Ransell, Evelyn (Mrs. Pete Freeburg) and Merle. Many of these children have died—some from that much dreaded disease of that time, pneumonia. In 1910, the Olsons purchased the farm just east of the homeplace from Edward and Martin Olson. A new house was built and much hard work went into making a living in those days—with no modern equipment.

Olson, Christian

Christian Olson, born at Biri, Norway near Christiania, emigrated to America and made his way to Wisconsin and a year later, 1867, came to Dakota Territory and took up a claim of government land on section 28, township 94, range 54 in Yankton County. In 1873, he married Thea Louise Bagstad who was born in Vernon County, Wisconsin in 1856 and came with her parents to the same area.

The Christian Olsons were the parents of Peter Oscar (1874), Carl M., John B. and Laura died in infancy. The three boys worked together with their father as they grew up.

PETER Olson married Bergine Olson, who was born at Biri, Norway in 1883 and came to Yankton County in 1893. They were the parents of the following children: Laura (Mrs. Dale Prichard), Chester, Oliver, Ivan, Harold, Gladys (Mrs. Alvin Peterson), and Alice (Mrs. Orton Anderson). Oliver lives on the Christian Olson homestead.

CARL (Charlie) Olson and his wife Louise were the parents of four daughters: Theresa (Mrs. Glen Hanson); Helen (Mrs. Larry Weiland); Mildred (Mrs. Noble White); and Ruth (Mrs. John Freng, Jr.). The Noble Whites lived on the original Carl Olson farm, straight west of Yankton. One son, Charles White remains in the area and farms his mother’s farm. He is married to Charlotte Snyder and has four daughters: Chris, Ann, Candace and Synnede.

JOHN Olson farmed in section 33 and his children were Clifford, Arnold, and Esther (Mrs. Carol Cook). Clifford remained on his father’s farm. He and his wife were the parents of three daughters: Dorothy (Mrs. La Rue Hanson), Betty (Mrs. Roger Highland), and Angela (Mrs. Dennis Johnson). Clifford died several years ago and his widow remains on the home place. Arnold Olson married Mildred Broderson and they live near Mission Hill. Their children are Stewart, Chandler and Judith (Mrs. George Munson). Stewart’s children are Scott, Bruce and Julie and Chandler’s children are Carmen and Crystal.

Olson, Knut

The Knut Olson family

The Knut Olson family of Voss, Norway arrived in Dakota May 8, 1873, to make their home with their uncle, Halvor Brynellen son at Gayville. He had written them that they could have his 160 acres if they would take care of him in his old age. But upon their arrival in Gayville, they found that he had been persuaded to give up all but 91 acres. The land he had disposed of is now the site of the town of Gayville. The Olsons came all the way from Quebec to Chicago and then to Gayville by train. All the earlier settlers had come in wagons or on foot, at least part of the way.

The family at this time was made up of the parents, Lars, the oldest son and Ingeborg (Belle) age three. The remaining children were born in Dakota: Olina (Mrs. Hans L. Hanson), Anna (Mrs. Herman Dahl), Iver and Martha (Mrs. Elmer Aseth). They all lived, a family of six children, the parents, the uncle and an elderly lady who made her home with them in the house. They all had to be clothed and fed. The first years were difficult and each year Knut, the father would say, “Where are the taxes coming from this year?” But later he entered the cattle and hog business which made returns a little better.
LARS Olson married Jennie Westene and was an early lumber and grain dealer in Gayville. Their children were: Lilian (Meyers), Carl J., Manilla (Mrs. Milton Gustad), Martha (Mrs. Walter Folk), Loyal and Gladys. Loyal, after working at the Security State Bank at Gayville moved to Elk Point to work in a bank there.

IVER Olson married Gustave in 1903. They lived their entire life on the home place. They had two sons, Marvin and Ernest who are well known for their athletic ability. Marvin played for three years for the Boston Red Sox, continued to play professional baseball and manage baseball teams. Marvin has been a scout for about ten years for the Minnesota Twins. Marvin married Vera Nyrop, and they have two children: Andre and Linda (Mrs. Gary Gibson). Ernest played professional ball for some time, married Anna Oleson and they have one daughter, Ruth Ann. Iver died in 1964 and Gustave in 1967. They are buried in the Gayville Cemetery.

Olson, Ole B.

The Peder Olson family (Son of Ole B. Olson)

Ole B. Halvorson came to America in 1868 with his son, John. Ole had been a carpenter in Norway and had a wife and seven children. He and John settled on a farm 2½ miles north and one mile east of the stage stop on what is now the Don Kaufman farm. He soon became known as Ole Olson and the whole family became the Olsons. The following year, his wife, Mary and their seven other children came to join them. The mother left the children in the care of their 18 year old sister, Johanna, in a family hotel, except for the baby, Martin whom she took with her on the stage to their new home. Mr. Olson met her and the next day, accompanied by a neighbor, drove a borrowed ox team to Sioux City for the other children. Regina, the youngest and only one to be born in America, was born May 14, 1873 on their farm. When Regina was five years old, the family moved to Gayville and Ole went into business of building wagons. The children of the Ole Olsons were: Johanna (Mrs. Chris Gilbertson), Hans C. John, Peder, Herman, Oleann (Mrs. Martin Dahl), Ottina (Mrs. Peter Jorstad), Martin and Regina (Mrs. George Mortensen). Regina celebrated her 99th birthday this day. The Olsons lived in Gayville the rest of their lives. Ole died in 1900 and Mary in 1913.

HANS C. OLSON, born in 1854, came to America when he was about 15 years old. He married Becka Erickson of Norway in 1879. They farmed in Yankton County, Gayville Township, section 15. They had six children: Ole, Nels, Martin, Fred, Herbert and Eddie. After Becka's death Hans married Dora Simmon and they had five children: William, John, Edna (Mrs. Jack Zorn), Carl and Ida, who died as a baby. The only descendent of the Hans Olson family in the community is son John who married Martha Larson and lives just across the road from his father's farm.

JOHN OLSON married Hannah Olson. Their children were Oscar, Mary (Mrs. Claus Jensen), Clara (Mrs. Peter Mettilt), Hilda (Mrs. Larson) and Mable (Mrs. Herbert Jolley). They farmed in Clay County, then retired to live in the house where Mary Garvey now lives. Their children were: Oscar, Mary (Mrs. Claus Jensen), Clara (Mrs. Peter Mettilt), Hilda (Mrs. Matt Larson) and Mable (Mrs. Herbert Jolley). Oscar and his wife Lena farmed east of Gayville for awhile, then moved to Vermillion. They had two daughters: Helen and Evelyn, neither whom live in the community.

Peder Olson, born in 1858, was 11 when he came to America. He married Maren Olson, born in 1862 in Christina, Norway and whose parents had homesteaded north of Vermillion. They were married in 1880 and lived in Irene and Vermillion before coming to Gayville to farm. They were the parents of 11 living children: Ole of Marysville, Washington, John, Mabel (Mrs. Clayton Bye), Agnes (Mrs. Anchor Bye), Emma (Mrs. Earl Erickson), Ella Belle (Jensen), Melvin of Garden Grove, Calif., Julius, Martin, Freddie and Peter M. Peder and Maren lived to celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary. They both passed away that year at the ages of 92 and 90. Only five grandchildren remain in this area: Keith and John, sons of Peter M.; Eugene and Marilyn, son and daughter of Freddie; and Gale Erickson, son of Emma. There are seven great-grandchildren; Mitch, son of John A.; Cathy, Cyndi and Cheri, daughters of Eugene; and Kevin, Lynn and Mark, children of the Gale Ericksons.

Pederson, Gustav

Mr. and Mrs. Gustav Pederson

Mr. and Mrs. Gustav Pederson were married in Totten, Norway in 1863. Three years later they came to America locating first in La Crosse, Wisconsin. In 1868 they decided to move west to Dakota Territory to take up government land which was plentiful at that time. Much of it was good farm land. Yankton was the territorial capital at that time and the closest railroad was at Sioux City. Gustav Pederson walked to Sioux City for groceries and carried them home on his back. Surely they were running a big risk going into the wilderness with their children and very little capital. There were no churches at this time and many meetings were held in the Pederson home. Visiting pastors came to serve them, baptized and confirmed their children, preached the gospel to them, and administered communion. The Norwegian language was used.

Gustav Pederson built an inexpensive log house for his family. He purchased some horses and cheap machinery; a breaking plow, a harrow and a lumber wagon were his main farming implements. He plowed patches of ground, sowed grain and planted corn. It took more grit and determination than capital to get started farming. Gustav died at the age of 64.

The Pederson family suffered many hardships coming up from poverty to opulence. Wood was cut and hauled from the James River. Wagons pulled by horses traveled slowly over hazardous roads. During the flood many people came to their home for shelter as their farm was one of the few on higher ground.
Martha, Gustav's wife was very efficient and active. It was no small task to feed and clothe her family of nine children. She died at age 82. The children of Gustav and Martha Pederson were: Olaus, Petra (Mrs. Ole Gortset), Edward, Lena (Mrs. Peter Ringstead Johnson), Martin, Gena and Mena (Mrs. Alfred Hagen). Two children died in their youth.

Olaus Pederson was born at La Crosse, Wisconsin. He came with his parents to the Gayville vicinity. He was married to Julia Halverson and they were the parents of nine children: Martin, Tillie, Gustav, Oscar, Minnie, Henry and three children who died at an early age. Olaus and Julia lived on a farm in the Mayfield area. Olaus died at the age of thirty-four.

Edward Pederson was born at Gayville and purchased a farm adjoining the Pederson homestead. This land had been school land. Edward married Minnie Hanson and to them three children were born: George, Elmer and Mabel. George and his wife Minnie reside on the old farm homestead. Edward died at the age of 59.

Martin Pederson grew to manhood on the old homestead where he passed away at the age of twenty-five years.

Gena, who never married, is the only survivor of the Pederson family of that generation in the year 1972.

George and Minnie have two sons, John and David. John is at home and farms with his father. David is married to Mary Ann Deens and they live in Omaha, Nebraska. Elmer is married to Laura Lax and they have two sons, Tom and Jim. Mabel is married to Reinhart Olson.

Pederson, Hendrik

The Henrick Pedersons homesteaded in Meckling Township in section 28. Their children were Herman, John, Marie (Mrs. Charlie Walraven), Anna (Mrs. Peter Haggestad), Susan (Mrs. Bart Mikelson) and Antonette (Mrs. Louis Kaeberle). Herman married Mrs. Albers, a widow with three children: Marvin, Harvey and a son who died when young. Herman and his wife were the parents of one son, Barton. Barton married Frances Klett, daughter of the Moritz Klett. They live northeast of Meckling and have one son, Omar.

Pederson, Colbin and Amund

Amund Pederson bought a farm two miles west of Gayville. He married Inger Helena Hagenson, who was born in Dane County, Wisconsin in 1863, the eldest child of Nels and Symmena Hagenson. She had to live with her aunt Mrs. Peter Johnson, who lived just across the road from Amund. To this union was born seven children. The Pedersons were charter members of the Gayville Lutheran Church. Amund was a very good singer and led the singing in the church. Amund was operated upon for stomach ulcers and died on the operating table in 1911. Helena was left to raise her young family, the youngest being about 8 years old, and to finish paying for the farm. Norman was old enough to help her some but she did a man’s work in the fields. Many nights when she couldn’t sleep, she sat up in bed and knit stockings for the family without a light.

Sunday afternoons after they were grown, the young folks would gather at the farm. She had a new house built and here she lived with her daughter Agnetta and family until Norman bought the farm. She then went to Volin with Agnetta and later bought a home in Gayville, the house being where the Olin Liens live. The grandchildren took turns staying with her during the summers. Her last years were spent at Agnetta’s and with her son Clarence. She died in 1942 at the age of 78. Her children were Ida (Norris), Alfred, Clarence, Agnetta (Mrs. August Lee), Norman and Edwin.

Clarence moved to Volin, then Canton. Alfred married Gladys Claussen and their only child died young. Edwin didn’t marry and died as a young man. Norman married Gertrude Ryken and they had two sons: Wilfred and Merle. Wilfred married Mildred Rinnan and they were the parents of two sons, Roger and Steve. Wilfred is now married to Virginia Clark and they live in Yankton but Wilfred farms the land where his grandfather Ryken settled years ago. Merle lives in Alabama, is married and the father of five children. Norman died when the boys were small, Gertrude lives alone at age 88 in Gayville.

Colben Pederson married Helenda’s (nee Anna) Pederson in 1884. They owned a farm in land Wright farm. Their children were Beatrice (Mrs. Thompson) and Melvin. They had the children when their children were small and their children were brought up by others. Roy married Gladys Mosser and they had six children. They live in California. Melvin married Lila Rosenstone and they lived in Ogden, Utah. They had no children and when Melvin died in 1966, his body was brought back to be buried in the Lamont Cemetery. Lola makes her home in Yankton.

Peterson, Martin and Hannah

Gayville’s 1971 Hay Day was dedicated to Mr. and Mrs. Martin Peterson, longtime residents of the Gayville community. Martin was born April 5, 1888 on a farm in Mayfield Township. Hannah Pearson was born at Highmore, October 29, 1888, but came with her parents as a child to the Mayfield community. Both were married on December 12, 1912 and lived on a farm there until 1977, when they moved to Gayville. Martin operated a garage and repair shop for fifty-one years retiring in 1969. Martin was a long time member of the Gayville Town Board and he and Mrs. Peterson are members of the Gayville Lutheran Church. Martin and Hannah have eight living children: Ethel (Mrs. William Larson) of Meckling; Rose of Richland, Washington; Floyd of Lakewood, California; Dorothy (Mrs. Ray Weverstad) of Pierre; Martin, Jr., and Larry of Yankton; Chester and Helen (Mrs. Derald Ryken) of Gayville. There are 25 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Piersol, A. R.

In 1875, A.R. Piersol arrived with the family consisting of his wife Emma, and two sons, Wesley and Roy, who were three and one year of age at the time. Eventually they were followed by Jay, Lee, Cora, and Martin (the only surviving one of my generation), all born in Meckling. From Freeport, Illinois, in 1873, before the rails were here, the first attempt to come by covered wagon failed; finally they arrived by train and settled on the land now known as the Groves Farm, which my grandfather had purchased a few years earlier for a few dollars per acre.

The family engaged in farming, which was a slow, uphill business considering equipment, drought, grasshoppers and floods. After several years (in the early 1890’s) Meckling made some growth. The country was filling up with settlers and offered some prospects for a little new business. So our family started a meat market and livery stable. The Market had a built-in refrigerator
which would hold several large cakes of ice; there was also a refrigerator wagon which Jay drove in the country three days a week and delivered fresh meat on regular routes. One reached the country Southeast of Gayville, the Mortensen’s, Smith’s, Lanes, Fargos, etc. Jay would drive in and sound a large musical-like gong attached to the wagon; the customers gladly came out to buy. We did our own butchering in a small building on the farm. Wesley and Roy had the winter job of cutting ice on the Missouri River and packing it in sawdust in a building on the farm (called the icehouse). The Meat Market was located just east of the old hotel building. We purchased hogs for butchering from farmers in the community. The price of steaks was around $1.00 per pound.

The Livery Business was started about the same period of time, 1890, with two driving teams and top buggies for hire. The venture proved to bring in a little cash, which was very scarce in those days. Business improved and at times required three teams. Traveling salesmen came to Meckling by train to fill orders for the local stores, and they hired transportation to Westville, and occasionally to Wakonda and Volin for the same purpose. Local people also became customers, especially Henry Westre, who was always scouring the country looking for cattle and hogs to buy. When he got a carload or two, he would ship them out on a Saturday night for the Chicago Monday market. Meckling had a reputation as a fast cattle shipping point on account of Westre’s activity. Also quite often some young man would hire a rig to take his sweetheart to a dance at Gayville.

### Freighting

In the late seventies, during the Gold Rush in the Black Hills, my father made a trip to Deadwood with a caravan of freight wagons. He drove a team and wagon and hauled eggs packed in oats. The oats were sold for $4 per pound and the eggs for $1.00 a dozen. He also sold the team and wagon for a good price and returned home through Nebraska, part way by railroad and the last (perhaps fifty miles or so) back up to Dakota Territory on foot (walking and catching rides with anyone on the trails at the time). The round trip consumed about a month’s time. The caravan probably averaged about 20 miles per day as they traveled to the Hills.

### Notes on the PierSol farm

During the ensuing years the family experienced flood, drought, grasshopper plague, and sometimes good crops, as did all Pioneers in the Dakotas. One son, Lee, died at the age of twelve. In 1905 A.R. and Emma PierSol sold their farm in Meckling and moved to Vermillion in the spring of 1906 where they spent the remainder of their lives. Three of the sons and the daughter went farther west and proved up on claims during the years between 1905-1912. Roy, Jay and Cora (married to Leonard Thoreson) were in Lyman County, near Presho, and Martin in Meade county, near Faith. All returned later and were farmers, Wesley near Meckling, Roy and Martin in Spirit Mound township near Vermillion and Jay near Sioux City in Iowa. Cora and her family settled in Kimball, Nebraska, but through the years continued moving westward establishing homes in Cheyenne, Wyoming, then Smithfield, Utah, and finally retired in Stockton, California.

A number of descendants, extending to the fifth generation, are still residents of South Dakota. A great-grandson, Lawrence L. PierSol, is at the present time a representative from Minnehaha county (Sioux Falls) to the State Legislature in Pierre. One of Roy PierSol’s daughters, a widow with two sons: Steve and Charles, Arlen married Gene Larson and lives in Gayville. She and her sons are probably the only PierSol descendants living in the area.

Children of the A.R. PierSols:
- MARTIN PIERSOL married Helen Engman of Vermillion and they were the parents of two daughters: Emma (Mrs. Russell Johnson) and Elizabeth (Mrs. Robert Torkelson).
- ROY PIERSOL married Mary Nelson and their children are Marge (Stengle) and Arlene (Larson).
- WESLEY PIERSOL married Ida Severson and their children are Guste, Raymond and Pearl (Mrs. Ray Dale).

JAY PIERSOL married Grace Leach and their children are Charles and James.
CORA married Leonard Thorsen.

### Quick, Joseph

Joseph Quick, son of Israel and John Quick was born in Grant County, Wisconsin in 1860. He was the eighth child in the family. His parents were Irish-English Methodists. He was a farmer and bee-keeper all his life. He was married to Lorena Belle Kane at Potosi, Wisconsin in 1882. Four children were born to them: Claude, born in 1883; Joseph G., born in 1885; Jeannette Rose (Mrs. Allen) 1887 and Bennie Quick, born in 1892. Joseph W. died in 1936 and his wife in 1928. They are buried in the Gayville Cemetery. CLAUDE WILLIAM QUICK came with his parents to Yankton County in 1892 when he was nine years old. He was united in marriage to Amy Talbot on May 25, 1909. To this union were born three children: Ruth (Mrs. John Carter), Lotan and Dennis. Mr. Quick was a member of the Methodist Church. He died in 1938 and is buried in the Gayville Cemetery.

JOSEPH G. QUICK was seven years old when he came to South Dakota. He married Maude Bryn and they were the parents of one son, Max. He married Betty Wibben and they have one daughter, June. Max and Betty live on the farm which the J.W. Quick’s settled upon when they came to South Dakota.

### Rye, Jens

Jens Rye was born near Bergen, Norway in 1835 and as a young man served five years in the Norwegian army. After a long and uncomfortable voyage in a sailing vessel and a short time spent in Wisconsin, Mr. Rye reached Dakota in 1868. His first impression of this new land was of tall waving grass as far as the eye could see and of the many Indian people. For several years, Mr. Rye walked through the Territory, working and looking over the land. Finally, he homesteaded one mile east of what is now Gayville and built a dugout for himself. The winters were rugged. He was often compelled to dig his way out of the snow in the mornings. Later, he built a log house and brought his parents from Norway to live with him. He was married in 1875. Five children were born to him and his wife Inger. Mr. Rye’s property was near the early day wagon trail and they often saw the pack trains of 8 to 10 wagons passing from Sioux City to Yankton. He was happy in his adopted country and never regretted coming to Dakota. He died in 1922. Two of their children remained in the Gayville area, Lincoln and Caroline (Mrs. Louis Christopherson).

LINCOLN RYE was born at Gayville Oct. 12, 1884. He married Tillie Larson. They were the parents of three sons and one daughter: Wilmer, Clifford, Manfred and Adaline. Lincoln died in 1971 and was buried at the Gayville Cemetery. Tillie remains at the farm home. Manfred lives nearby. He is married to Virginia McKelvie and they have three daughters: Janet, Denise and Renee.
The Peter J. Ryken Family

Peter J. Ryken, Sr. was born in Sprang, Holland on Sept. 13, 1850. His wife Hendrina Quynys was also born in Sprang on April 12, 1850. They came with their family of seven children to America in 1883, and settled near Orange City, Iowa. Four more children, all boys, were born to them while at Orange City. In 1885, the family moved to a farm northeast of Gayville, and in 1902 to a farm southwest of Gayville, where the parents lived the rest of their lives. Peter, Sr. died in 1912 and Hendrina died in 1923. Nine sons and three daughters were born to the Rykens, with two of the sons dying as infants. The others are: Bertha (Mrs. Peter Rozen) 1872, Anthony, John 1875, Adrian, Adriana (Jenny Buckman Bye) 1881, Peter J. Jr., Gertrude (Mrs. Norman Pederson) 1883, Merrance, Henry, Lawrence, James.

ANTHONY “Tony” Ryken, 1873-1945, married Becky Olson in 1902. They lived in Gayville where Tony ran a pool hall, later the hotel and at another time, a barber shop. Becky had a daughter Alma. Tony and Becky had two children: Henrietta and Lawrence. They also had a foster son, Russell Grant.

ADRIAN “Ed” Ryken, 1879-1963, married Elsie Lekley. They homesteaded in Gregory, but moved back and bought a farm near Meckling. Their children were Harold, Hendrina (Mrs. Gerrit Algra), Mark and Lavonne (Mrs. Clayton Hanson).

PETER J. Ryken, 1882-1961, never married, but stayed with his parents and farmed the home place. Jennie and her sons Raymond and Harold lived at home after her husband, John Buckman, drowned; later she married Charlie Bye. Pete’s sister Gertrude and her two sons Wilfred and Merle lived with him after her husband, Norman Pederson died.

HENRY Ryken, 1886-1960, married Marie Garvey, daughter of Thomas Garvey and they farmed near the home place all their lives. They had no children.

LAWRENCE Ryken, 1890-1963, married Pearl Van Osdel in 1913 and they lived on the Van Osdel farm adjoining the Ryken farm. Their children are Marvin, Peter, Bill and Esie (Mrs. DeHaan). Marvin now lives on the home place with his wife Gladys (Knutson). Their children are Marvin, Jr., Mary Ann (Mrs. Roy Wilcox), Bob, Linda and Sam.

JAMES “Jim” Ryken, 1892-1947, married Cora Pederson. They farmed south of Gayville and had two sons, Kermit and Donald. Kermit married Helen Peterson, daughter of Martin Peterson, and they farm the home place. They have four sons: Gary, Jim, Ronnie and Brian. Kermit lives a mile west of Gayville and is married to Francis Larson. They have four children: Richard, Barbara (Mrs. Bill White), Vickie (Mrs. Paul Kotalik) and Nancy, and one grandson, Joe Kotalik.

John moved west of Yankton.

Sampson, Ingiri

Ingiri Sampson (1805-1887) of Nedre Opheim, Norway was married in 1851 to Sampson Erickson (1811-1854). They were the parents of the following children: Julia (1851) (Mrs. Peter W. Johnson) Agatha (1853) (Mrs. John Olson, Thor, Iowa, Susanna (1841-1873), (Mrs. Nels Hagenson), Marta (1844-1905), (Mrs. Anton Larsson), Nils (1846), Lars (Lewis) (1849-1920). Ingiri and the children came to the United States in 1853, except Julia and Agatha who came in 1858. They lived in Iowa and Nebraska until Dakota was opened for settlement, then came across the Missouri the spring of 1860 and took up claims. Ole settled near the river, his mother and the other children in the Lakes settlement. Another very early settler was Peter Stephenson, born in 1826. He and Ingiri were married in 1864 and lived in the Gayville area until Ingiri died in 1887.

OLE SAMPSON was born in 1835 and came to Dakota in 1880. In 1864 he helped organize the first Norwegian Lutheran Congregation in the area. In 1862, his cabin had been the gathering place of the Norwegians during the Indian scare. He married Anna Kjonngard (1849). There were no children. Ole held various county offices. He died in 1890.

LEWIS (LARS) SAMPSON (1849-1920) was a boy of 11 when the family came to Dakota. Some of the stories of the Indian scare were recorded in early histories as he told them. He married Britha Johnson (1845-1904) and they had four sons, two of whom died in infancy: Sigward (1877-1937), John (1879-1880) John Edmund (1881-1881), and Oscar (1882-1937). Lewis was a grain dealer in early Gayville, later moved to Yankton where he was in the hardware business, but still came back to Gayville once a week to lead the singing in the church. Sigward was, at one time, a druggist in Yankton. Our information about the family is rather limited, but Julia’s grandson, Edward Johnson lives near Mission Hill and her son-in-law, George Peterson lived in Gayville many years.

Segard, Nels

Mr. and Mrs. Evan Segard

Mr. and Mrs. Nels Segard left their home near Williehammer, Norway in 1886 to come to America with their two children, a girl who died on the ocean and a married son Evan. They came to Dane County, Wisconsin and Evan’s son Gustav was born in 1867. The following year 1868, they came to Dakota and settled northwest of Gayville. Nels and Evan’s farms were next to each other. Evan helped to haul lumber with an ox team from Sioux City to build Vangen Church. Evan lost his first wife in 1869 and she was one of the first to be buried in Vangen Cemetery. Evan married again and his second wife was Berge Haalen Hansen, a sister of Mrs. Peter Kolberg. To this union were born seven children: a daughter who died in infancy, Hulda, who died at age 20, Nettie (Mrs. Mose McElwain Conklin), Emma (Mrs. Edwin Johnson), Maria (Mrs. John Morman), Edward and Lena (Mrs. Halburg Olson).
GUSTAV was raised by his grandparents, the Nels Segards. They died in the late 1890’s. Gust married Anne Christensen of Norway and they had 6 children: Nora, Elmer, Henry, Louis, George and Hulda. Gust served on the school board of the Inch school for many years. His first wife died in 1909 and he married Mattie Pederson Cook in 1920 and they moved to California where he died in 1942. His body was brought back to be buried in Vangen.

Gustav’s sons Elmer and Henry died young. Louis, who lived all his life on the home place, died in 1965. His widow still resides there. They had two daughters but neither of them lives in this George lives in Winner and Hulda lives in Mitchell.

EDWARD lived all his life on the home place. His father had one of the first pianos in the Dakota Territory and it is now in the Yankton Museum. The old Segard family Bible is there, too. Edward never married. His sister Lena’s son Laverne lived with him for some time. Edward died in 1962 and Laverne died in 1968.

Shepherdson, Charles W.

Charles Shepherdson was born in Hamilton County (Cincinnati) Ohio in 1837 to Charles and Martha (Mason) Shepherdson who had come from England. Charles was employed as quartermaster during the Civil War. After his discharge he worked as a wagonmaker in Illinois, making hearse. In 1860, he had married Emma Van Pelt and they had one son, William. His second marriage was to Mary Corbin in 1865, and in 1866, they came to Dakota Territory and took up a claim in section 17 of Gayville Township, where they lived one year, then moved three miles north where they lived five years. He dealt in livestock in Clay County around Meckling for several years, then returned to Yankton County in 1882 and farmed until they retired and moved into Gayville. Their children were: Nellie (Mrs. Linn Van Osdel), Charles, Mattie (Mrs. Linn), Harry F. Mark, and Nona (Mrs. Benson). Mrs. Shepherdson died in 1915 and Mr. Shepherdson in 1916.

Smith, Hans

LEWIS SMITH born in 1884, married Bessie Boyles in 1917. They farmed the home place. They had two children, one daughter died at birth and Dorothy June, born in 1925, is married to Deloss Garney. They live in Chicago and have three children. In 1946, the Lewis Smiths retired from the farm and bought a house in Yankton. Mrs. Smith died in 1964 and is buried in the Danish Cemetery. Lewis, at 88 is still active and interested in the farm and community.

ALBERT SMITH married Edel (Hansen, 1886-1971), who was born in Esbjere, Denmark. They were married in 1913 and lived most of their life on the farm in Norway Township. Albert is now 65. He moved to Gayville, then Vermillion and finally to Yankton when they retired. Evelyn was their only child. She married Milton Johnson on August 15, 1934.

JESSE SMITH lived northwest of Gayville and served as Yankton County Commissioner for twenty years. He and his wife Clara had two daughters: Marjorie, (Mrs. Luther Odell) and Betty (Spaugh). Clara died in 1938 and Jesse in 1953. They were buried in the Danish Cemetery.

Snow, James

James Snow came in his teens to the Gayville Community from near Ft. Worth, Texas. In 1894, he was married to Josephine Johnson, daughter of Martin Johnson. They lived on several different farms, but in 1905, they settled on a farm in section 36, Volin Township. To this union eight children were born: Bennie and Clarence of Yankton, Omer and Elmer, deceased, Edna (Mrs. Clarence Binns) and Clara (Mrs. Raymond Buckman) of Gayville, John of Lomita, California and Effie (Mrs. Whisler) of Palmer, Iowa.

BENNIE SNOW married Delia Benson and their family consisted of Marjorie (Mrs. Guy Williams), Kenneth of Gayville and James of Pierre. Kenneth married Koreen “Dot” and they farm the old Snow farm north of Gayville. They have the following children: Michael, Kirk, Robin, Elizabeth, Timothy and Sarah. A son, Terry Lee died in a farm accident.

CLARENCE married Clara Olson and they farmed near Yankton but are now retired and live in Yankton. They have two daughters, Shirley and Barbara.

Stanage, John

John Stanage, born in 1828, immigrated from County Cavan, Ireland at age 24. He joined the U.S. army to serve in the Mexican War and later was sent to California to protect the gold miners from hostile Indians. In 1854, he was sent to Fort Ridgley, Minnesota with a company of soldiers. Here he met Bridget Murman and they were married there. In 1856, he entered Dakota Territory with the Kearney Expedition. His wife accompanied him and they
arrived at Ft. Pierre on Oct. 24. A short time later, he was honorably discharged and he continued working for the army in the quartermaster department.

A son, John, the first white child born in Dakota, was born at Ft. Pierre on March 20, 1857. In the summer of 1857, Fort Pierre was abandoned and John Stanage and his family drove a six mule team to Ft. Randall. Daughter Mary was born during the family's stay at Fort Randall. In 1859, the Stanages went to Sioux City by steamboat and outfitted themselves with two oxen, two wagons, cows, a plow and other provisions. Then on July 10th, they returned to Dakota and established their home in a log cabin on the east bank of the James River. He erected the cabin with the aid of Indian labor which he paid for. He had learned to speak the Sioux language and was a fast friend of the Sioux because he treated them fairly.

They homesteaded 160 acres and became the first white settlers in the area. John's wife Bridget, was at the time the only white woman in Dakota. He established a rope ferry across the James River. In 1861, he was commissioned postmaster at James River Crossing. A son James was born in May, 1861. In September 1862, the Stanages and their neighbors, the Bradleys, guarded the house with muskets and a pitchfork, axe and butcher knife. The children were hidden under the bed. After this scare, the family moved to the Yankton stockade. A second daughter, Elizabeth, was born there in 1867. Mr. Stanage served in the Territorial Legislature. He continued to live on the old homestead until his death in 1905. His funeral was conducted by his old friend, Father Nichols of the Mission Hill Congregational Church. John, Jr. and Mary never married. Elizabeth married Frank Dominick and James married Katherine Garvey, daughter of Thomas Garvey.

Steens, Gorham

Gorham Stevens (1833-1917) of Skowhegan, Maine, married Louise Steward (1843-1908) of Bingham, Maine. Gorham (who incidentally lost a brother with the Maine regiment at Gettysburg) was a logging camp cook for 13 years and accompanied logging runs down the Penobscot and Kennebec rivers. They came to Charles City, Iowa in 1888. He bought some woodland and cut and delivered wood. In 1870, they arrived at their homestead with what they had in their wagon and $1.60. Four children grew to adulthood, Wallace, Fred, Mary (Mrs. Herb Brownson) and Leonora (Mrs. James Y. Fairley). Several died of diphtheria. This was 2 miles north of Mission Hill where Edgar and Harold Stevens live. They built a shack, apparently destroyed by a prairie fire. After the fire, a neighbor returning from Yankton started some of the Stevens for not plowing a fire break as he had done, but he hurried home when informed his place was gone too. His fire break had failed. Gorham hauled groceries from Sioux City to Ft. Randall and Pierre, and buffalo hides back for some time. He kept tobacco for the Indians who gave him no trouble.

Gorham traded his horses for a yoke of oxen (they could live on grass) and started farming. Nora Fairley (1872-1950), later recalled living in a sod house and also trips with her father behind oxen taking grain to the Bloomingdale Mill, a long way each way. They slept on the mill floor. Her mother accompanied them once as a pleasure trip. They attended the Methodist Church in Gayville, where Nora apparently met her husband, Jim Fairley. His mother was one of the church's founders. James and Nora's children are Winifred (Mrs. Russell Minehart), Vern, Wilber (deceased), Sybil (Mrs. Paul Minehart) deceased, Carroll, Stella (Mrs. Ben Seiler), Roy, Howard, and Nina (Mrs. Roy Patterson). James and Nora are buried in the Mission Hill Cemetery. Where Gorham and Louise Stevens are also buried.

Struck-by-the-REE

BY BEN MCBRIDE, SR.

Struck by the Ree, hereditary head chief of the Yankton Sioux, was born about six miles east of the city of Yankton on August 18, 1804. History reveals that the expedition of Lewis and Clark was camped with the Yanktons on the date of his birth; that they were notified of the birth of a son of a head chief and that this son would later become chief of all Yankton Sioux. A ceremony was arranged at which the Indians were informed that he would be a citizen of the United States; would be a power for good among his people and a friend of the whites. His name was that of his grandfather, who named him.

On April 19, 1858, Strike with seven sub-chiefs signed an agreement with the Federal government by which all of southeastern South Dakota was ceded to the government. The Yankton Indian Agency was established the following year, 1859 at Greenwood. So far as is known Struck by the Ree was the first Yankton Sioux to accept Christianity, having been baptized by Father De Smet.

As a small boy I recall a talk he made to the Yankton Indians on July 4, 1881, advising them to conserve their timber resources, otherwise the time would come when they would be without fuel. He advised them that the time would come when whiskey would flow like water and they should be careful of its use. He said that in time the white man would make the Missouri River flow in the opposite direction. He died at Greenwood, Dakota Territory, July 28, 1888 at the age of 54 years and was buried at the Greenwood Cemetery by his friend John Williamson.

Taylor, Charles N.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles N. Taylor, came to Dakota Territory with the New York Colony in 1864. They settled in Clay County and founded the village of Lincoln, south of where the town of Meckling is located. When the railroad came through, the Taylors moved their farm buildings north so that they were near the railroad. This was the early fall of 1873. The town was platted and became a thriving village during the late 1800's and early 1900's. The Taylors built a spacious new home in 1898. They had a grocery store there for a time and had an interest in several other businesses including the bank. During the flood, their house was one of the two story houses in town to which some of the rural people fled and were sheltered. Their children were George, Henry and Lorell Charles. Lorell died while a young man, George had a ranch at Hemingford, Nebraska. Henry was president of the Meck-
ling bank at one time.

There is a private cemetery on what was the Taylor land, in which the Taylors and some of their friends and neighbors were buried. Charles Taylor's sister Phoebe was married to George Edgerton, Sr. and they were also among the homesteaders who came from New York State in 1864.

Van Allen, Levenes

The Levenes Van Allen family

Levenes Van Allen was born in 1856 in Michigan and during his early childhood, went with his parents to Racine, Wisconsin where they farmed for several years; then to Grinnell, Iowa and in 1875 settled at Green Island, Nebraska, across from Yankton—his parents, brother Arthur, Levenes and sister Rebecca. Levenes and Arthur spent several seasons working on the river steamers and became known as river men. In the fall and spring they hauled passengers across the river between Yankton and Green Island. When the river was full of ice, they used poles with steel hooks to maneuver the ice cakes.

During the flood they were marooned on Green Island for several days. After they were rescued they learned of a father and daughter who were thought to be in their house when it was pulled off its foundation by the flood waters. Levenes and Arthur maneuvered their boat through the dangerous ice chunks and on reaching the house, chopped a hole in the gable and helped Henry Morton and his daughter Hannah to safety. They had been trapped in the low attic with water rising to their waists as they sat on the rafters without room to stand or light to see.

In 1883, Mr. Van Allen was united in marriage to Kate Van Osdel, daughter of Dr. Abram Van Osdel, who made her home with her grandmother, Mrs. Milton Morey, after her parents died. Kate taught the first school at Irene and was the second teacher at Inch school.

In 1886, Levenes rented a farm east of the James River and in 1887 he bought a farm on Haggin's Bend.

The Van Alleys were the parents of 5 children but only one, Flossie, reached maturity. They also had two adopted children: Clover, (Mrs. Perry Rees) and Arthur. Kate died in 1924 at the age of 61. Levenes retired to a fruit farm in California.

Van Osdel, Dr. Abram

Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Van Osdel

Dr. Abram Van Osdel was the second son of Jacob and Susan Van Osdel, born in 1819 in Indiana. His ancestors were among the 60,000 people who immigrated in the period of 1624-1664 from Holland to the Dutch colonies on the Hudson River. After studying medicine under a doctor who was a close friend of the family, Abram married Mary Taylor and they produced 10 children as they moved from place to place in Indiana, Kentucky and Minnesota. Mary and three of their children died of typhoid fever in Minnesota. Abram moved his family to Arkansas, then to Minnesota, where he met and married Anna Ribby and finally they moved to Dakota Territory in 1862 with his two youngest sons, William and Samuel. They arrived just as the Indian uprising threatened Yankton. Abram became a member of the garrison and William and Samuel at ages 15 and 13 joined Company B of the First Dakota Cavalry. Anna conducted school in the stockade for a time. In the spring of 1863, Abram and Anna homesteaded east of the James River where their daughter Kate was born. Abram practiced medicine and served in the legislature in addition to farming. Of the five children born to Abram and Anna, 3 died in infancy. Kate and Washington survived. In 1889, Abram and Anna and their two children moved to Kansas where Abram died in 1870 at the age of sixty. Anna died in 1872, when Kate was 10 years old. Kate and Washington "Linn" were brought up by the Milton Morey's, Anna's mother and stepfather.

Abram Van Osdel, Jr., son of Dr. Abram and his first wife Mary, was born in 1845. At the age of 17, he joined the Minnesota Cavalry. In 1864 he came to Yankton County where he worked on...
WASHINGTON LINCOLN VAN OSDER, "Linn", youngest child of Abram and Anna, was born in 1868 on the farm east of the Jim River. His father died when he was two and his mother when he was four. His grandmother Mrs. Milton Morey took Kate and Linn to raise. Linn became a farmer and married Ida Holcomb of Gayville in 1889. They started farming on the Bend west of the Herley Miller place. Later they lived where the Harry Nelsons live. Their family consisted of Hazel born in 1908 and Claude, born in 1896. Ida died in 1901 at the age of 31. In 1908, Linn married Nellie Shepherdson. For many years, Linn owned and operated the Van Osdel Grain Elevator which still stands in Gayville. In 1913, Hazel married Chris Mortensen. In 1920, Linn sold his elevator and moved to Nampa, Idaho. Nellie died in 1948, Claude, in 1950 and Linn in 1955.

Volin, Joseph

Joe Volin was born near Montreal, Canada in 1838, the son of Charles and Marie (Bernier) Volin. They moved to Dubuque, Iowa in 1848 and in 1846 came to Dakota. Joseph filed on a claim six miles east and 1/4 mile north of Yankton on the James River's east bank in 1865. Joseph had farmed for a year before filing his claim. He married Amanda Taylor in 1868 in Clay County. Joseph's brothers Henry and Eucharist came in 1866 and filed on claims north of Gayville near the present location of Volin. During the flood, Joseph saved his horses by bringing them into the house, but all his cattle were swept away. The family lived upstairs for several days until rescue boats came and took them to the bluff. Joe and Amanda's family consisted of Mary, Gertrude, Hattie, Stella, Nellie, Edward, Alice and Charles. As far as we know, there are no descendents of the Joe Volins on the bottom.

Wadsworth, T.H.

Thomas Wadsworth born in 1862 came as a young man from Oswego, New York to Council Bluffs, Iowa, returned to New York to be married to Fanny Atwood, returned to Council Bluffs in 1881 and then to Yankton County in 1884 to operate a stock farm owned by a cousin of his, James R. Rice; he later bought the place where he was living and spent the remainder of his life at the same place. The house into which he and his wife moved was made of logs. Mrs. Wadsworth helped organize the first ladies aid and the first Sunday School in the community. Mr. Wadsworth in 1899 built a large farm house to accommodate his family of seven children. After his sons took over the farm he built a new modern home in Gayville, right next to the farm. This house now belongs to his daughter, Mrs. William Klatt. Mrs. Klatt is an invalid and makes her home in a rest home in Yankton. None of the Wadsworths remain in the community.

Walraven, Charles

The Walraven boys, Charles, John, Bert and Tunis, came with their parents to America from the Netherlands and lived for some time at Pella, Iowa. They moved to Orange City, Iowa. Their father died and their mother remarried. So the four brothers, not wanting to live with their stepfather, left home and came to Gayville, where they lived and worked with the Peter J. Rykens for a year. The next year they moved onto a farm north of Gayville, which Mr. Ryken helped them rent. Then the brothers each went their separate ways, as several of them married. Charles bought the farm near Meckling in section 27 where he farmed alone for 10 years. Then he married Marie Peterson, daughter of a nearby farmer, Henrich Peterson. The Charles Walravens had four children: Helen, Viola (Mrs. Anton Paulson), Gustava (Mrs. Willard Woods). All of the Walraves' children remained in the community. HERMAN married Dorothy Berg and they have two adopted children, one of whom, Warren lives on the farm which Dorothy's parents owned. Their son Warren is married and has two children: Kaelynn and Troy. The Tony (Anton) Paulsons have one daughter, Mrs. Romi Walters who lives in Van Nuys, California. The Willard Woods, who live west of Gayville have one daughter, Rita, (Mrs. Jack Worden) and they have one daughter, Robin. The Wordens live on a farm adjoining the farm of the Willard Woods.
Warfield, William

William Warfield was born in Ohio in 1830. He learned to be a ship's carpenter and worked on Lake Erie for eight years. In 1852 he married Maria Smith. They lived in Iowa from 1859 to 1863 and then came to Yankton County, Dakota, where William operated a sawmill. His wife Maria died and in 1867, he went back to Iowa and married Sarah Hardin. In 1870, they returned to Dakota and started to farm. William and Sarah were the parents of two children: Edwin and Frank. Thirteen people lived for two weeks in the tiny attic of the Warfield home during the 1881 flood with the water five feet deep below them. They saved their cattle by filling the barn with hay and driving the cattle up on it. They were rescued by Captain Lavender. Sarah and William both died in 1909. Their sons continued to live on the farm in section 26 of Gayville Township. They built a new home in 1914 with hot water heat and electricity. Edwin married Lillie Cowling in 1898 and they had four children: Chester, Elmer, Clifford and George. There are no Warfields living in the bottomlands in 1972.

West, Clark

Clark West was born in Chautauqua County, New York in 1841, and was the son of Louis and Miranda West. In 1854, his family moved to Mitchell County, Iowa. He met and married Mary Elizabeth Van Osdel in Minnesota in 1863 and they were the parents of two sons: Abraham Lewis and Jesse C. They came to Dakota Territory in 1867 with $75 and a team of horses. They secured a homestead in section 8 of Gayville Township and built a log house with a dirt roof. They replaced the log house with a frame house in 1875. During the flood, the water stood 4 feet deep in their house. They had grain stored in the granary from four previous years crops which was destroyed by the flood waters in addition to the 30 head of cattle and three horses which they lost. Clark died in 1923 and his wife Mary in 1928. In 1904, Clark had originated the little village of Fullerville. He and his sons ran several businesses there. Abraham Louis West came with his father and mother to a farm west of Gayville when he was five years old. Ida Harris had come from Odell, Illinois to Gayville with her parents, Isaac and Sarah Harris in 1883. Ida and Abraham were married in 1889 and lived a short time with their parents while their house was being built. They paid $300 for the farm covered by a loan at 10% which took many years to repay. Their neighbors were the Ols Nielsen, parents of Harry Nielsen and grandparents of Leonard Nielsen who lives next to the Vangen Church. Ida and Abraham were the parents of Harry, Walter, Lillian (Mrs. Clarence Cowman), Edna (Mrs. Neil Larkin) and William. There are no descendents of the Wests living in the area.

Wright, Bruce

Bruce Wright together with his parents, Thomas and Elizabeth Wright came to America from Yorkshire, England when Bruce was a small child. They lived for a time in Virginia, coming to Gayville in 1880 and in 1883 moved to a farm three miles east of Volin on the Bluff road. The farm is now owned and operated by Thomas Wright's grandson, Thomas Christensen.

In 1889 when Bruce was 19 years old, he came to Gayville and worked for the Bagstad and Aaseth Corporation on their farming and cattle feeding operations. In 1907, he married Thea Hanson, who was employed in the store of her two uncles, Iver Bagstad and John Aaseth. To this union two children were born, Roland and Alice (Mrs. Maynard Christenson).

The Bagstad and Aaseth Corporation discontinued their farming operations in 1911 and the following year, the Wright's moved to a farm three miles west of Gayville on Highway 90 where they lived until their deaths. Mr. Wright died January 15, 1947 and Mrs. Wright on July 1, 1948.

They were loyal Gayville supporters, having stock in the Bagstad and Aaseth Company store, members of the Gayville Lutheran Church and Mr. Wright was Chairman of the board of the Security State Bank for many years, an office he held at the time of his death.

Young, Albert

Albert Young was born on a farm three miles south of Des Moines, Iowa, in 1863, the son of Vincent and Elizabeth (Stanton) Young. Elizabeth died when Albert was six years of age and his father married again. He came to Dakota Territory in April 1883, bought a relinquishment and lived there until he died in June 1889. Albert married Miss Elizabeth Lane, the only child of Leander and Ann (Shepherdson) Lane, in October of 1888 and they purchased the farm in section 26, Gayville Township. Their first home was destroyed by fire in 1900, which they replaced. The Youngs had 8 children: George, Maude (Mrs. Earl Stone), Leander, Robert, Mary (Mrs. Mike Foley), Nellie (Mrs. Jake Peterson), Fribbie and Albert, Sr. died in 1952 and his wife Elizabeth in 1929.

GEORGE YOUNG bought a farm in section 23, Gayville Township. He married Anna Nelson. They had three daughters: Marj (Mrs. Alfred Anderson), Dora (Mrs. Lloyd Peterson) and Helen (who died as a small child). George's wife Annie, still lives in the community.

LEANDER YOUNG married Vera Jeffrey. They had one son. Leander died in World War I.

FRISBIE YOUNG married Gertrude Berdahl. They have three children: Martha (Swanson) Caroline and Eric. Frisbie graduated from Luther Theological Seminary in 1901, was ordained in Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Minneapolis in 1940, and has served as pastor, chaplain and counselor in different areas.

ALBERT YOUNG married Inga Larson and they farmed the home place. Their family consists of Elizabeth (Mrs. Robert Walsh) and her two sons by a former marriage, David and Lee Wermerson; Loetta (Mrs. Marvin Kurtz) and their three children: Ann, Kathy and Eric; Mary; Teresa (Mrs. Marc Emerson); and Paul, who is now farming at home.

Zack, Martin and Joseph

Joseph Zack, at age 14, came to America from Germany in 1885 with an older brother named Martin and an uncle. The uncle went west and Joseph and Martin found work with a German speaking family on a farm near Bridgewater, S.D. After about three years Joe went to Ototumma, Iowa and got a job driving a team on a coal wagon.

Sometime later he returned to S.D. to Clay County and found a job on a farm a distance east to the farm on which Martin worked. Earnings were saved to buy farming equipment and after a time he and his brother Martin decided to go into a partnership. They came to Yankton County and rented a farm on the James River, later owned by Victor, Jay and Ralph White. After renting two years it was no longer for rent. The partnership was dissolved. Joseph rented land from Abe Van Osdel on what is still called the knoll.

Next he bought 80 acres from Tom Garvey's brother and farmed it perhaps two years. During this time there was a combination of reverses. Drought and grasshoppers took his crops and the
country west through a period of financial depression. He saw he
couldn’t handle the deal so asked his brother Martin if he would
like to buy the north 40. His niece, Alice Zack, Tom White, and
family farmed and resided on the place. Martin planted trees and
constructed buildings on the north 40 and it has always been the
Zack home.

Later Joseph bought nearly 80 acres from John Daughtery. It
is located across the road from the Lee Lane home and bordered the
old James River bed on the west side. Before he bought this land,
he rented land to go along with the 40 he owned. He was among the
first ones in this neighborhood to raise alfalfa hay. The hay was
planted on the southwest corner of his 40 and produced heavily.
Also raised on his land were grain and livestock, such as hogs and
cattle. He never married and he passed away in June of 1926.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Zack

Martin Zack, age 16, brother Joseph and an uncle came to
America in 1885 from Germany. Their uncle went west and Mar-
tin and Joseph found work with a German speaking family on a
farm near Bridgewater, S.D.

Three years later a young man came along with a team and
covered wagon and wanted some one to travel with him to Okla-
ahoma. Martin liked the idea so decided to go along. They camped
along the way, cooking their meals over an open fire. Both found
work.

In 1889, Oklahoma was opened for settlement. Men mounted
their horses and waited for the signal to start. The race was on. The
first one to set foot on the soil could claim the land. In the race some
were trampled by horses or shot in disputes over the land. Martin
was not of age to participate but nevertheless saw it all. Norman
and Guthrie were the towns visited by he and his fellow traveler.

While working in hay fields Martin fell ill with ague (a cold fit
of an intermittent fever). Many northerners who had gone south
became ill with it. After that happened he decided to return to
South Dakota. He took time traveling back, stopping in the state of
Kansas doing farm work and also worked a season or more on a
railroad.

He arrived in Yankton in the fall of 1890 and walked on the
railroad track to Gayville to look for a job picking corn. Andrew
Jackson a farmer living about five miles east of Volin in Clay
County offered a cornhusking job and he accepted. After corn
husking was completed, he was offered a job as farm manager. Mr.
Jackson was a large farmer and cattle feeder and employed several
men. He went away for periods of time and left his farm in the
hands of managers. Martin’s work was satisfactory so he held the job
for a few years. The farm is now owned and occupied by Mrs.
Wilma (Art) Backlund.

Martin saved his earnings and his intent was to start to farm.
He and his brother Joseph, decided to form a partnership and came
to Yankton County and rented a farm by the James River later
owned by Victor, Jay and Ralph White. After two years it was no
longer for rent. The brothers dissolved the partnership.

Martin rented what is now the Henry Sylliaasen farm. He
erected his own buildings and farmed it about two years.

The next move taken about 1900 when he purchased 40 acres
of bare land. Trees were planted and the buildings erected. He
needed more than 40 A. to farm so he rented some land from John
T. Daughtery. On December 31, 1904 he married Mathilda Larson,
daughter of an early day homesteader. They became parents of 4
children: Helen, Maurice, Chester and Alice [Mrs. Thomas White],
who passed away in December 1970.

As time went on more land was purchased from John
Magorien and also from John T. Daughtery. Mrs. Zack passed
away in March 1930 and he raised his four children without help.
He passed away in April 1962 at the age of 92½ years.

Additional
Family Histories
Out of Alphabetical Sequence

Dahl, Ole. L.

Ole Dahl, at his Aunt Bertha Bottolfsen’s 80th birthday.
Ole is at front, left. Beside him, Fred Sealey. Back row: Rev.
G. Natwick, Willard Gill, Harvey Albers, C. T. Yestness,
Delmer Moore, Harry Larson.

Ole L. Dahl, a long time resident of the Meckling community,
was a nephew of Ole Jetley and Bertha Bottolfsen. His mother
passed away and Ole spent much of his youth with the Jetley
family. He and his sister, Taletta Dahl, took out claims in Gregory
County. In 1918 he married Tina Fosse and took up residence
southwest of Meckling. While they themselves were not blessed
with children, nieces and nephews and other neighborhood chil-
dren spent much time with Ole and Tina especially enjoying Ole’s
“tail tales” and Tina’s fried chicken.

Ole will long be remembered for the articles he wrote in farm
magazines, his “News from the Banana Belt” in the weekly Plain
Talk, and his avid interest in politics. Oftentimes, he read his
newspaper while planting corn and when neighbors asked now he
could cultivate such crooked rows, he replied that “he’d use the
same horses.” His keen sense of humor and knowledge was a joy to
those around him.

Ole died in Meckling in October, 1943. His wife, Tina, resides
in San Diego, California. Both were members in the Meckling Lu-
theran Church.
The early settlers were also in constant danger of fires, the open prairie was covered with tall, thick grass, almost like a forest, and a person could very easily be lost and oftentimes they were. If a fire got started very little was saved in its path. As a very small child, I witnessed one of these fires and our home being in the path, father took us out onto a plowed field, together with a tub of water, and we had to stay there while mother and father tried to fight the fire. The kind hand of Providence saved our home by sending the wind in a slightly different direction just in the nick of time, otherwise, everything would have been destroyed. Father fought the fire until he was nearly exhausted and I well remember how glad we were when he came back to us.

Father also spoke of how they had to fight the mosquitoes in the summer time when they drove with oxen. It was almost impossible to get the oxen to move, often the oxen became crazed by them and would run away into the brush and all they could do was to hang on as best they could and hope for the best.

Father remembered the Indians passed by his home and crossed the river to have their revenge on the Wiseman family and how frightened they all were.

As a small boy of eight years, he was present when the first Lutheran Church was organized in Dakota, near Vermillion. He told us how those early pioneers held services in the log cabins by reading out of their bibles and playing from the old hymn books that they had brought with them from Norway. Often they walked for miles to attend services.

On November 6, 1878, he was married to Ragnil Larson and together they established their home in Norway Township, a short distance from his father's homestead. They encountered many difficulties but they managed to get together some livestock and do farming on a small scale, but the flood of 1881 completely destroyed their home and livestock. They saw the flood waters coming, rolling towards them, nearer and nearer, finally coming into the house, forcing them into the low attic. Higher and higher it rose until it reached the ceiling. It was a mournful sound to hear the kitchen clock strike the hours through the night as they kept watch; the clock being nearly submerged by the water. They stayed there until it froze over enough to carry them. They crawled out through a hole in the roof, taking a few clothes with them, carrying the baby. They had to walk very carefully but even so mother fell through the ice. Leaving the baby lying on the ice, father and Lars Meland were able to get her out. With the cold weather and wet clothes, mother was nearly exhausted when they finally reached the neighbors where they stayed until they were able to go on to Grandpa Larson's home. They remained there until the water receded. Coming back it was hard to know the location, as the buildings or what was left of them, had been moved and all their livestock gone. They rebuilt their home about a quarter of a mile from the old site, on higher ground. Without horses, little farming was done that year, but through floods, droughts and grasshoppers, they struggled on, looking upward and onward.

Father was thoroughly interested in pioneer history and had a very keen memory on matters pertaining to the early settlement and was often called upon to give affidavits and verify facts as to their names and land transfers and the like.

He was the first assessor of Norway Township in 1881. He was always interested in good schools and was treasurer of District 12 for twenty-five years. He was treasurer for Bergen Church for twenty-two years.

He was always considerate of the poor and needy; they never left his place hungry or without aid.

The last years of his life were devoted to landscaping and working with different shrubs and flowers, watching them grow and develop. He also delved into pioneer history.

Our home is broken but the beautiful memories we have of him as a loving and devoted father can never be taken from us. May we follow in his footsteps and live lives worthy of his example.

Iver's family consisted of Gertie (Mrs. Martin Anfinson), Bertha, Alice, Alex, Martha, Amanda, Georgia (Mrs. Lewis C. Iverson), Theresa and A. Beatrice. Alice, Theresa and A. Beatrice survive, as well as the four sons of the Lewis Iversons: Leo, Bowie, M., Jerome, Mekking; Daryl, Sarasota, Fla.; and Duane, of Vermillion.

Olson, Herman

HERMAN OLSON was born in Norway in 1860 and was about 9 when he arrived at Gayville. He farmed one mile east of
Gayville and married Gertrude Hagvold of Norway who came to America as a young woman with her two sisters. Herman and Gertrude were the parents of seven children: Mabel (Mrs. Bert Ficken), Hilma (Mrs. Julius Myron), Ida, who died in 1910, Oscar, Randolph, Art, and Halbert. Herman died in 1920 and Gertrude in 1930. They were buried in the Gayville Cemetery. The oldest son, Oscar, born in 1887, married Ella Hagg in 1914. He served in WW I. He, at one time, ran a garage, later was associated in the hay business with his brother-in-law. They have one daughter, Betty Lou, born in 1930 who is a counselor in Hopkins, Minnesota. Randolph was a veteran of WWII. He never married and is a resident in a rest home. Art Olson lives in Vermillion. Halbert married Lena Segard. Their children were Francis (Mrs. Perry Reams), Vivian (Mrs. Roy Peterson) and Lavern. Lavern, wounded in WW II lived on the Segard farm with his uncle Ed and after his death, lived there alone. He died in 1968.

**Steele, Lee and John**

Thomas Steele of Iowa bought land in Clay County, South Dakota. He felt it would be productive if it could be drained. He shipped a carload of bulls to break to work at ditching the bottom land north of Meckling. But the men who worked there didn't get the job done. So he had the bull shipped to the market. Then in the spring of 1914, he persuaded his nephew, Lee and John Steele to move from Jefferson County, southeastern Iowa to Clay County, South Dakota. They came in an emigrant car on the railroad.

Lee and John had married sisters and they decided to farm in partnership, 50-50. They are still partners. A ditch company was formed by their uncle Tom who hired Lee to be the foreman of the ditching crew. They worked at ditching the land during the years 1915 and 1916 but it was difficult and discouraging because the farmers wouldn't cooperate and the men wouldn't get back to work on time. So they hired cooks and bought equipment so they could serve meals near the area where they were working. Then they bought tents to house the workers, so they could get the job completed.

During the 1916 flood, their wives stayed with friends on the bluff but the men stayed with the livestock. Luckily, the water didn't reach the buildings. During the twenties, there were a great many robberies in the area. Once the Meckling bank was burglarized by blowing out the back of the building. Until they could get the building repaired, the trustees agreed to take turns guarding the bank. So Lee had to take his turn at staying in the bank armed with an automatic revolver and a shotgun. He rolled up in a blanket but was too nervous to sleep and was ready to shoot anything that moved.

The Steele brothers operated the Hazelton ranch for ten years. For several years they put up 700 acres of alfalfa. They had harness for 40 head of horses and hired many young men to do the haying. They hired some young women to help with the cooking and housework and several romances and marriages resulted.

The two families have been active in the community, church, school and political life of the Meckling community. The Lee Steeles had no children but the John Steeles had two daughters: Sarah Ellen Marcine and Mary Ruth. Marcine married Wilbur E. Tiahrt in 1948. They have four children: William Todd, born in 1951, Thomas Wilbur 1959, Sara Lynn, 1961 and Susan Elizabeth, 1964. They live with Marcine's father, John. Mary Ruth married John Armstrong and after living in this area for some time, they moved to Kennewick, Washington with their three children. Mrs. John Steele (Jessie) passed away March 14, 1936 and Mrs. Lee Steele (Sadie) died October 21, 1941. Lee Steele will be 92 years old on the 4th of July, 1972.