



*A Newsletter of the Norman County Genealogy Society*

## **Also In This Issue:**

- Norman County – People, Industries and Institutions – Part I (continued) – Page 2
- From the Newsletter Editor – Page 2
- Genealogy Tips – Page 3
- Letters to the Old Country (continued) – Page 3
- About Our Organization – Page 4

## **Letters to the Old Country – Part I**

So many Norwegians made the trip to America during the nineteenth century that emigration from Norway was second only to Ireland.

The educational level of Norwegians had been raised considerably at the time, and the improvement of the school system resulted in much greater literacy. The result was that the accounts from America had a much greater input from lower social groups.

In a novel by Alexander Kielland, one of the characters says that while the upper crust of society was static, the working classes were developing because they read thousands of letters that poured in to the country from Norwegians in America.

People read the letters from their loved ones again and again. These letters were a better source of knowledge than books written by total

strangers. The exchange of letters therefore stimulated people to become better readers.

This was to have repercussions. It was complained at the time that, thanks to the letters from America, people in Gudbrandsdalen and Valdres knew more about Dakota and Minnesota than they did about places in Norge (Norway).

*Continued on page 4*

## **Norman County – People, Industries and Institutions – Part I**

At the September session, 1882, the commissioners caused to be made the first regular plat, or map, of Norman county, and it showed the following organized 22 townships of the county: Bear Park, Sundahl, Spring Creek, Lockhart, Shelly, Halstad, Anthony, Pleasant View, Green Meadow, Strand, Waukon, Fossum, Wild Rice, Lake Ida, McDonaldsville, Hegne, Hendrum, Lee, Mary, Wheatland (changed to

Rockwell), Home Lake and Flom.

The board ordered a bridge to be built over the Wild Rice River, near the village of Twin Valley. The bridge contract was let at \$1,100 to Paul O. Morck. Lake Ida Bridge was ordered torn down and moved to a point on the town line between Lake Ida and McDonaldsville townships.

At that session the liquor license rate for Norman County was fixed at \$75. The public auctioneer's license was fixed at \$5 per year.

The county attorney's salary was then made \$500 a year. Dr. Abbott was made county physician, his salary fixed at \$150 a year and he was to furnish his own medicines.

*Continued on page 2*

## Norman County – People, Industries and Institutions – Part I (continued from page 1)

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*“The inference is that the commissioners believed the buggies in town were much more stylish and valuable than those used by the country people.”*

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Excerpts from: *History of Clay and Norman Counties Minnesota, Their People, Industries and Institutions – Volume I and Volume II*, by John Turner and C.K. Semling, 1918, B.F. Bowen & Company, Indianapolis, Indiana

The county auditor's salary was fixed at \$1,050 and he was also made the county's purchasing agent. The salary of the school superintendent was fixed at \$400 per year. The salary of the probate judge was made \$300; all of which salaries were made payable monthly.

At this meeting the board notified the bondsmen of clerk of the district court, Fred Puhler, that they would be held if he failed within ten days to get his books into proper shape.

The county printing was awarded to the *Norman County Banner*.

Petitions were sent to the state representative and senator urging the passage of a bill to allow this county to issue bonds for \$10,000 with which to pay off its old indebtedness and to make improvements. The most of this money was needed in the settlement with Polk County.

### Business of the Commissioners in 1883

On March 23, 1883, new school districts and changing boundaries of old ones largely occupied the attention of this meeting, but the most

important item considered was the settlement with Polk County, the sum of \$10,320. being admitted as a debt to that county and for which bonds were later issued.

*The Norman County Banner* was made the official paper of the county for the publication of the delinquent tax list, and a \$200 bond was required from the printer who was to set up such tax lists for publication. Strain became the bonded printer for Norman County.

Drs. Koyl and Hicks were appointed county physicians at \$30 per month and they were obliged to furnish all necessary medicines. This contract was made for one year.

A county book agent was appointed in the person of John S. Johnson, whose duty was, under an act of the Legislature, to look after the school text books of this county, his salary being fixed at \$500 per year.

In the summer of 1883, the county board met again as an equalization board and fixed the tax rates and valuation on various property as follows: horses, yearling,

\$20 per head; three-year-olds, \$75; cattle, yearlings, \$8; two-year-olds, \$14; cows, \$20; all other cattle, \$30 per head; mules, \$70; sheep, \$2; farm wagons and carriages, \$20, except in Ada village, \$30. The inference is that the commissioners believed the buggies in town were much more stylish and valuable than those used by the country people.

At the November meeting in 1883, the board asked for prices of two fire-proof safes of about 3,000 weight – one to be used by the county auditor and the other for the office of probate judge. The remainder of the session was “snowed under,” as they said, with an endless number of bridge applications and a large amount of school district organization work.

*From the newsletter editor: My apologies for getting this newsletter out nearly 2 weeks late. I'll try to do better next issue!*

*Marijo Vik*

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## Genealogy Tips

### DAR

Do you think you might have an ancestor who served in the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783)? Would you like to know whether your ancestor is listed with the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) in the "Patriot Index"? A helpful group of organized DAR VIS volunteers monitor the RootsWeb DAR Message Board every day and welcome lookup requests.

Include your Revolutionary War-era ancestor's first and last

name, spouse's name (if known), dates of birth, death, and state of residence when posting your lookup request. You need not be interested in joining the NSDAR to request a lookup.

<http://boards.ancestry.com/mbexec?htx=board&r=rw&p=topics.organizations.dar>.

### POW Website Fills Gaps for Some WWII Family Histories

Nearly 60 years after the end of World War II, Japanese researchers have compiled a

comprehensive database detailing the fate of the 3,526 Allied prisoners of war who died in Japan between 1941 and 1945. The database was created by the POW Research Network Japan, a group of independent researchers who built on the records of the Commonwealth Graves Commission.

The database can be accessed at:

<http://homepage3.nifty.com/pow-j/e/>

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*"**DAR**" Previously published in RootsWeb Review: 12 January 2005, Vol. 8, No. 2.*

*"**POW Website Fills Gaps for Some WWII Family Histories**" Previously published in RootsWeb Review: 2 March 2005, Vol. 8, No. 9.*

## Letters to the Old Country – Part I

(continued from page 1)

It is important to keep in mind that the letters from America represent definite distortions. Most country people wrote little, and many of those who did write were fairly well off. Those who were less successful in America tried keeping this from people back home.

Many of those who wrote letters home did not do it just to keep in touch with family and friends. Their main objective was to tempt others to follow them to America so they could establish their own

Norwegian institutions, schools and churches. This would make it easier for Norwegians to leave their mark in relation to other immigrant groups. Such letters were not only read by the addressee, but were copied and circulated to all who were interested, and were sometimes published in newspapers.

It cost so much to mail a letter that this also limited the desire to write, and explains why so many letters were written to be shared by many

recipients-and on thin, light paper on which every available inch was covered with writing.

In the 1850s it cost about half a dollar to send a letter from the USA to Christiania (renamed Oslo in 1925). At that time a worker earned from one half to two dollars a week.

**Excerpt " From America to Norway: Norwegian Americans Write Home" by Knut Sprauten, The Norwegian Institute of Local History, Oslo**

<http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/emigrasjon/index.html>

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**[www.rootsweb.com/~mnnorman](http://www.rootsweb.com/~mnnorman)**

## **About Our Organization...**

The Norman County Genealogy Society was formed on February 27, 1997 in Ada, MN for the purpose of assisting persons interested in research family histories and sharing information.

Charter members of the society were Roland Carpenter, Iris Duklet, Colleen Goltz, Ardis Horn, Sharon Larson, Roger Niebeling, Gladys Prussia, Ronald Rasmusson, Christine Roesch, Ronald Roesch, DeFloren Rude, Edna Rude and Kathleen Skaurud.

A few resources available include:

- Obituaries taken from area newspapers.
- Cemetery records
- Marriage records
- Death records from 1871 to 1981
- Census records
- Civil War Veterans
- 1883 Pensioners on the Roll
- Churches and Towns

Much of this information is posted on our website.

The Society meets on the third Saturday of the month at 10:30 am in the Dekko Center or Norman County Museum, Ada, MN.

Annual Dues are \$10.00 for a family membership (local) and \$5.00 for an associate membership (out of area.) Dues should be sent to the Treasurer in January:

Ardis Horn  
101 1<sup>st</sup> Street East  
Ada, MN 56510