

Biography of John S. Byington
--Helton Ulstad

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EARLY SUTTON VICINITY

as related by John S. Byington, of Sutton, early pioneer.

As near as I can remember the first schoolhouse built in these parts was on the N.E. corner of Sec. 30 in Dover Tp. on the homestead of D.R. Swarthout in the year of 1883, at a cost of \$4000.00 the lumber being hauled from Sanborn. Mr. Swarthout was a veteran of the Civil War and after the Soo Railroad was built he moved to Wimbledon, where his son and daughter now reside. The next school aside from the one in Cooperstown, that I remember, was built in Helena Tp. on Sec. 33 in the year 1886 and the first teacher was Miss Nora Sullivan who taught in the summer of 1887. Her home was in Illinois and after teaching in Griggs County for several years she changed her name to Mrs. J.S. Byington, in November, '91. She died in July 1892. Some of the early settlers of this section was C.H. Mosely, Spencer Leigh of Michigan, J.G. White (a cousin of Ex-Gov. White of N.D.) , J.W. Fiero, Peter Fiero, A.G. Lindsey, C.S. Roe, J.S. Byington from New York, August Palm, Carl Berg, Chris Sonju, Jack Stewart, William Stewart, Peter Eimon, A.J. Anderson, Hans Osien, Claus Jackson, Chris Jackson, and C.C. Frydenberg, all of whom lived in the south half of Helena Tp. and Mabel Tp. or just over the border.

Other early settlers were Nicolai Swenson who was at one time our county Treasurer, John Michaelis, N.L. Michaelis, who became sheriff of Griggs County in 1886; Barney Berlin, who came in 1883 from Larimore with his family and moved to the Gifford and White farm in the southwestern part of Dover Tp. ; Wm. Sandy and Howard Wilson, residents of Bartley and Dover Tp. Both Sandy and Mr. Wilson have been county commissioners of the 4th Commissioners' District. Howard Wilson and Barney Berlin now live in Barnes County, Mr. Wilson at Leal and Mr. Berlin at Valley City, with his daughters, Mrs. Florence Hewson and Mrs. Charles Flowell.

Other early settlers in this vicinity were John Ebentier, Joseph Ebentier, A.L. Rhodes, Wm. Kingsley, John Nicoll with father, and three

brothers, Sandy, Dave and Charles; William Howden and two brothers,^{2.}
James and Ben, Robert Bailey, George Hartman, Scott Van de Bogart,
Robert Starr, Jacob Westerhauser, Willie Wilson and Lyman Lewis, residen
of the north part of Mabel Tp. or the southern part of Kingsley or
earfield Tp(s.)

Charles Gartman, Andrew Fenner, August Fesko, John Francis, Ed Guest
and W.S. Hyde, of Helena Tp.

Helena Tp. was named after the wife of Peter Fiero, as Helena was
her given name. A petition was signed by the residents of Helena Tp.
for that purpose. Bartley Tp. was named after a young man by that
name--one of the early settlers in Bartley tp. Kingsley Tp. was
named after Wm. Kingsley who I believe was the first settler in that
township. Mabel Tp. was named after Mabel Boeckman (Mabel Nicoll) who
was a daughter of John Nicoll and was the first child born in that
township.

The first house built in Helena Township was on the farm that
Jens Nelson now lives--1½ story 16 by 24 with an L 16 by 16-- 1 story.
This was located just half a mile south of Revere. At the same time
a granary was built on the same farm by Hiram Schoonmaker of New
York. The granary was 20 by 80 ft. The contractor was a Mr. Bowers of
Sagborn and all but two loads of the lumber was brought by team by
the writer of this article. The distance was over forty miles one way.
One little incident that happened to me at that time was my introduc-
tion to the flying ants. I was riding home one hot afternoon on a load
of lumber when I felt something bite me on the neck and after brushing
them off for about a half an hour I thought I better investigate as the
misery was almost unbearable so I stopped my team, got down on the
ground, took off my shirt and what I found took me a good half hour to
get out of the inside of my flannel shirt. Having never seen anything
of the kind before, I related the incident to the carpenters when I got

from that time on.

The first postoffice was established in the above mentioned house with Peter Fiero for postmaster, and the only time we ever got the mail was when some member of the family or one of the nearest neighbors went to Sanborn and returned with the mail. That is the way things were 'till there was a postoffice established at Montclair, at the section house, one mile north of Hannaford. Archie Sinclair was awarded the Star Route job to carry the mail two or three times a week to Helena P.O. From there our postoffice was changed to a settler's home named Dick Sellwood. After a while the postoffice was moved to the Binon Ranch where Harry Kolpin now lives.. A short time later A.J. Anderson built a store on his farm and the post-office was moved there, and there it stayed until the Great Northern Railroad built the Fargo-Surrey line thro' this part of the country, e----when the postoffice was moved to Revere---- within half a mile of where it was originally.

Another incident I remember that might be of interest to some who are howling about the hard winters we have had to endure these past few years. In the winter of 1895-1896 Martin Thompson who was foreman of the Binon Ranch at the time, went to Hannaford with a load of wheat and was to bring back a load of groceries and coal for the farm. He was overtaken by a blizzard and when he was just west of the Mosely farm, as it was called at that time, he got lost and strayed about half a mile north and got into a big hollow place on the prairie, where he got stuck and being dark and not knowing which way to go, he had to unhitch his team and start out to find a place of shelter. After walking about two miles northwest of where he had left the sleigh, he was fortunate in reaching what is now the Fred Councilman farm, where he stayed till after the storm, which was a terrible one and lasted three days. After reaching the Binon Ranch, he with others looked for many days for his sleigh but it was entirely covered up and was not found until spring.

Another time ,in the winter of 1887-'when M.S.Michaels was sheriff, he was ordered to go out to Oscar Kjelson's place and get a team of horses which were owned by Ole Johnson and someone had a mortgage against them so he takes Chris Jackson with him for company. On the way out there it came up one of those storms you read about but seldom see. I think it was about the 9th of January .They got along alright till towards night ,when the storm got worse and just about where Sutton is located now,they got lost. After dark they decided to take shelter in a haystack,and here the horses could eat a little,too.After staying there for a while, Mr. Jackson was so cold, he wanted to give up. The sheriff, being a strong man,thought differently and he shook Mr.Jackson out of his lethargy and told him things were not as bad as they looked and just at that time,there was a lull in the storm and in looking around the corner of the stack ,they saw a light just a short distance ahead . They shouted for help ,when Lo and behold, they were only a few rods from Kjelson's home,where they received a generous welcome and where they stayed until after the storm.The next clear day ,several teams with officials,left Cooperstown (and also business men) looking for the ones they supposed were lost and perhaps frozen.

Before I quit, there are Chris Kjelson,Oscar Kjelson,and Adolph Kjelson among the early settlers which I failed to mention,also Ben Thorsgard and Otto Thorsgard,all good men of early Mabel Tp.

Bibliography: Quoted word for word,as John S.Byington, the earliest pioneer in Mabel Tp. -- who is still living there.

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