

John Hogenson

John Hogenson, postmaster of Romness, of Sec 16, Romness<sup>town</sup>,  
He was born on a farm in Norway, June 22, 1847 - the  
only son and 2nd child of 5 children, to Logen and  
Martha (Johnson) Hogenson, both natives of Norway -

John Hogenson came to Amherst Filmor Co, Minn  
in 1867 where he farmed until he went to  
Griggs Co in the spring of 1880. He "squatted"  
on his land in 1882.

He was married in Filmor Co, Minn, in 1876,  
to Miss Karen Vesten. She was born in Norway  
in Dec 23, 1855, and came to Filmor Co, Minn,  
at 12 years. She was the daughter of Erick and  
Bertha Vestern. They had nine children:  
Helen, Edward, Clara, Josephine, Louis, Joseph,  
Ida, Otto and August. The two eldest children  
were born in Minnesota; the rest in Griggs Co.  
Helen, now Mrs. Ole Anderson, lives in Wells Co.

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Biography of John Hogenson  
--Borghild Bue, Granddaughter

John Hogenson, the pioneer of Griggs County, was born in Asperusten, a tenant farm, (Husmandsplads) in the parish of Aamot, Osterdalen, Norway, June 19, 1847.

His parents were Martha and Hogen Asprusten. In Norway, the pioneer's name was John Hogenson Asprusten.

Up to the age of nineteen years, he helped his father on the farm, during part of the winter in the lumber woods, and often during the summer driving logs on the Rena and other rivers. In the year of 1867, his father died and the same year about the first of May, he emigrated to America to better his condition.

In the mountainous regions of Norway, making a living was accomplished with much hardship and having heard of the golden opportunities in America, he decided to follow the call of his heart and to seek the land of milk and honey.

The pioneer decided to go to Minnesota, instead of any other state in the union, because his cousin Hogen Johnson who left about two years previously, sent letters from Winona, Minnesota to Mr. Hogenson in Norway, telling in particular about the state in which he dwelt.

He emigrated to America about the first of May, 1867, with his cousin, Martin Johnson, and his mother, Mrs. Olliane Johnson. The trip was made on the sailship, Refondo and was piloted by Captain Harris. They journey took six weeks and three days from Christiania (Oslo), Norway, to Quebec, Canada. During the trip, fifteen deaths occurred and after the corpses were prepared for burial, a brief service was conducted by the captain and the bodies were sunk into the ocean depths.

After arriving in Quebec, the journey was continued by rail and as was common in those early days, the only accommodation for immigrants were box cars equipped with planks around the walls for seats. They journeyed to the United States boundary to a point on Lake Huron, where the passengers embarked on a lake steamer. They were packed together as closely as possible on the main deck among bales and boxes of merchandise with no bedding or beds. When they got too tired standing up, the only way to get rest was to lie down on the deck floor. In about thirty-six they landed in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, continued from this place by rail to LaCrosse, Wisconsin, then on a steamer on the Mississippi River to Winona, Minnesota, which ended their journey.

In company with his cousin, Martin Johnson, and his mother, he landed in Winona, Minnesota, in June, 1867, without friends, acquaintances, or even relatives at the time, no money, no knowledge of the English language, a condition which would not be envied by any citizen. However, though these conditions were hard to meet, they soon overcame them. It was summer and as they were brought up to bear hardships in their early training in the lumber woods or other vocations in the mountain regions, they conceived the idea at once that they could use any bush for shelter. They had a few provisions left from the trip so they could manage to get along a few days while seeking employment.

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The next day, after arriving in Winona, Minnesota, they met a farmer, Andrew Larson, from Highland Prairie, Fillmore County, Minnesota, who asked Mr. Hogenson to come home with him and he would try to help him. He worked for Hohl three days and was paid one dollar, which was the most valued dollar he had ever possessed. The next day he went south and came to Sylfest Topness, and he hired himself for two months and received twenty-five dollars.

In the township of Amherst, he made his home for thirteen years, working around for the farmers and in the Wisconsin timbers for two winters. In 1868, he worked on the railroad grading west of Rushford, and the following year west of Lansboro.

His mother, Mrs. Martha Asprusten, came from Norway to Minnesota in 1872. They lived together until 1876, when the pioneer was married.

He married Karen Western who was born on a farm called Western in the parish of Lunner, Hadeland, Norway, the twenty-third day of December, 1855. She came to America with her parents, Bertha Rustad and Irik Western, and five sisters in 1868.

Mr. and Mrs. John Hogenson were married by Rev. Kr. Magelson at the parsonage in Highland Prairie, Fillmore County, Minnesota, on the seventeenth day of February, 1876.

They lived four years in Amherst, when they took Horace Greeley's advice: "Go West, young man and woman, to make a home for yourself and your loved ones." In the spring of 1880, Mr. Hogenson left Fillmore County for the Wild West, previously informed by his friend, Peter Mathison, who had been employed with the government surveyors, that the northern part of Barnes County, what is now Griggs County, was to his judgment the right place for an ideal home. Mr. Hogenson looked for timber, water and plenty of hay, which he found within a short time. He arrived at Valley City, the twenty-third of April, 1880, by railroad. The next day, he started from there by foot, arriving that day at Sibley Crossing. During the night a heavy snowfall came, which made traveling harder. He borrowed a pair of skis and made use of them as far as where Martin Ueland's place is now. The following night, he camped on the banks of the Sheyenne River not far from where Torkel Njaa resides now. Mr. Hogenson arrived April 26, 1880 at Amund Nelson Opheim's home. On April 27, he arrived at his present location, which has been his home in Romness Township ever since. This ends his first trip to Griggs County.

During this trip, his friend, Peter Mathison, met him here at his present location. They built a log hut on Section 16, broke five acres and put up some hay, and made some preparations for the coming winter.

During their first trip, the first postoffice in Griggs County was established in the summer of 1880, located on Section 8, Township 147, Range 58, later named Romness Township, on land now owned by Seval Friswold. The postoffice was named Durham. Frank Taper was the

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appointed postmaster and his sister, Mrs. Durham, as an assistant. That office was discontinued in a year or two; and another postoffice called Lybeck was established on Section 25, with Andrew C. Knudson as the postmaster.

The mail was hauled from Newburg, near Hatton, and later a route was established from Valley City to Pembina.

In connection with Durham Postoffice, Mr. Hogenson related the following incident or experience that came under their observation during the summer of 1880.

"While Mr. Taper was postmaster, Mr. Durham and his wife lived with him in the same house. One evening in the summer of 1880, Mr. Taper and Mr. Durham had some trouble, and according to Taper's story, Mr. Durham drove him off from the place with a gun, although he managed to take with him the contents of the postoffice which consisted of a few letters."

"At that time, Peter Mathison, Martin Johnson and myself camped on our place; and late in the evening, Mr. Taper arrived with a gunny sack and some contents, telling the story about the trouble and saying he was going to leave the country and would take the postoffice down to Opheim's. In these early days, we thought a postoffice would be a great asset to a community, although we did not want the office and could not at that time well take care of it. We objected to letting it go down eight miles from us. After some persuasion he left the office with us. Frank Taper went away and I have never seen him since."

"Mr. Mathison and I had to go back to Minnesota for our families. During the evening and night, we instructed Martin Johnson, so he could act as postmaster while we were absent. Mr. Johnson's tenure as a head of the first postoffice in Griggs County did not last very long."

"The next day, Mr. Durham and his wife, mounted on horses and each carrying a six shooter, arrived on our ground, and expressed themselves in a language which would not look well in print, that there would be trouble about the postoffice. As we did not want the postoffice, expressing ourselves in favor of its being at their place, and as Mrs. Durham was assistant, she was the person that should have it, they went home using a more pleasant language than when they came."

This incident will show that the postoffice in early days could be moved without any government consent.

During his trips in 1880, through the summer of the same year, the following settlers arrived in Romness Township: Ole B. Olson and his sons, Gilbert, Bernt, Martin and Theodore, from Iowa; Andrew C. Knudson, from Wisconsin; Mrs. Anna Nelson and her sons, Andrew and Nels, and her daughter Marie, from Iowa; John E. Qualey, from Minnesota; John Dahl, from Iowa; Martin Johnson, from Minnesota; and Iver Siem, from Iowa, settling across the line in Steele County. This completed the settlement in 1880.

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Mr. Mathison and Mr. Hogenson returned to Minnesota in the latter part of July. During the summer months, they worked out in harvesting and made preparation to move their families and property to their new location.

On September 1, 1880, he started back overland with a yoke of oxen hitched to a prairie schooner in company with his wife and two children (Hellene and Edward), Peter Mathison and wife. They drove twenty-six head of sheep and sixteen head of cattle, and covered a distance of about twenty miles a day. They went through Rochester, Zumbrota, Canon Falls to St. Paul, Minnesota. Passing through the main street of St. Paul, the sheep crowded on the street car track so the horse-drawn car had to stop for the sheep to move forward. They continued the journey through St. Cloud, Alexandria, Fergus Falls and to Fargo, which was only a small village at that time. From Fargo, they came across country through the present site of Hillsboro and Mayville, from there to Golden Lake in Steele County, where the last settlers were found. From there or part of the way, they were guided by Mount Franklin in Romness Township and other hills near their place. They arrived at their homestead on September 30, 1880, covering a distance of approximately six hundred miles. Directly after his arrival, he made two trips to Valley City, a distance of fifty miles, with his yoke of oxen, for supplies and provisions. It took him five to six days to make the trip.

Nearly all the first settlers established their homes in the timber close to the river, not suspecting the threatening floods that endangered them when the Sheyenne River would be swelled by spring thaws.

During the winter of 1880-1881, a heavy snowfall averaging about three feet on the level, had fallen. In the spring, the snow melted and swelled the river, naturally flooding the lowlands. John Hogenson, being one of the settlers trapped by the waters, narrates the following experience:

"One afternoon I noticed the waters rising gradually and before night it was over the top of the banks, so we made preparations immediately to move to higher land. We had a tent, which we pitched up and moved the family into, drove the cattle out, but left the sheep. A settler by the name of Martin Johnson agreed to remain in the log hut during the night. A gun was left in his charge with the instructions for him to discharge it in case the flood should threaten the place."

"Mr. Johnson had arrived earlier in the day from a long tramp through the snow and slush from Valley City, and being weary and tired, thought a good bed and some sleep would be a rare treat for him. During the night we were watching the water and noticed it rising gradually, but heard no report from Mr. Johnson. As soon as daylight broke in the morning, we hitched up a yoke of oxen to a wagon and made the trip to the log hut. We peeped through the window and saw the water reaching nearly up to the bottom of his bed, and Mr. Johnson sound asleep. We awakened him, and much to his surprise, he found himself surrounded by water; he had to plunge right into it to get out of the hut. We rushed

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about to get the sheep moved and also some of the household goods. Among the articles I noticed a sack of flour which I went to get, and not being aware that the trap door leading to the cellar had floated up, I accidentally stepped into the opening and in I went, flour and all."

During the flood, their provisions commenced to run low. They still had some coffee, flour and syrup in their possession, but they were fifty miles from town, and water everywhere around them, the higher land being the only dry place. They had to "skimp" along until the water would sink down so they could go to town for provisions.

The following incident happened in the spring of 1881:

"One day a starved hunter, Mr. Matt, came along and wanted to board with Mr. Hogenson. He had a gun and some ammunition along. As their meat supply was almost gone, they promised to help him out, providing he would get some meat for them. He promised to do all he could, although game was not plentiful at that time of the year. He shot a couple of prairie chickens the first few days. However, one morning when the meat supply was gon (Mr. Hogenson believed it was providence that sent it) a large, lonely goose came soaring in the air, looking for a place to settle down. When the goose came over a bluff east of their location, she must have noticed a small lake formed by the melting snow close to their camp, and there she settled down. Mr. Matt got his gun and started off, remarking, "There's a dead goose." This was true enough for as soon as they heard the report of the gun, the goose flooped her wings and could move no more. The next thing was to get the bird on dry land without getting too wet. At that time, Mr. Hogenson had an ox which they had trained for riding bareback, so he got the ox and started out to get the goose on the small lake. When he came close to the bird and reached for it, the ox became frightened and started to do some broncho stunts, flopping Mr. Hogenson off into the water. The ox made for the shore and Mr. Hogenson picked up the goose and started for camp. Soon preparations were made to get the goose roasted. Mr. Hogenson remarked that they would have a "real" feast for once, and they amused themselves over their first hunting experience in Romness Township.

These and other experiences, both laughable and serious, were had by the early pioneers. Many a pleasant and interesting moment has the pioneer spent recalling past memories of the sacrifices and trials they went through in order to make an easier pathway for the coming generation, and their community a happier and more cheerful place in which to dwell.

Mr. Hogenson's early farm machinery was an old fashioned walking plow and a wooden harrow; oxen were used for power. He bought his first horses in the year of 1883.

The early crops were wheat and oats. The first year, five acres of wheat was not very good due to his poor farming. The following year the yield was thirty bushels to a the acre of wheat.

The fuel in early days was wood, which they got from the timber near their location.

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The first school of Romness Township was built in 1883; located on Section fourteen. The teacher was Mr. Markwood.

In the early part of the pioneer days, they did not have churches but held the services in the different homes. Mr. Rev. Vaage was the first traveling preacher.

In 1882, the first church congregation was organized by Rev. <sup>d.</sup> Lundeby. They built a church in 1897 located on Section 22. The congregation named the church Ringsaker, having Rev. O. K. Quamme as their pastor.

Mr. Hogenson served as postmaster from 1887 to 1904. He was appointed postmaster of Romness Township during the year 1887. The Romness postoffice was established a few years earlier with Peter Mathison as postmaster. In 1887, he was elected County Commissioner for one term; he also acted as town and school clerk for many years. He took an active part in organizing and establishing the Romness Methodist Church of which he has been a member since it first started. He has always been ready to help in worthy causes for moral uplift of the community.

Mr. and Mrs. John Hogenson have spent forty-seven years in Romness Township and can recall many hardships and pleasant memories of their pioneer days.

They have had nine children in all, of whom seven are still living: Edward Bellewin, Van Couver, British Columbia; Ragna Josephine (Mrs. Carl Bue), Peter Lewis and August Nicolae, Cooperstown, North Dakota; Henry Joseph and Otto Melvin, Portland, Oregon; and Ida Caroline (Mrs. Lawrence Stenbro), Aneta, North Dakota. The other two, who passed away, are Hellene Mathilde (Mrs. Ole Anderson) in 1924; and Clara Julia in 1908.

They have been the grandparents of twenty-three grandchildren in all of whom eighteen are still living. Hellene Mathilde was the mother of ten children, John Oliver, Lillian Kathleen, Elmer Spencer, Marion Henriette, Clara Alice, Arthur Lewis, Ruth Irene, Ida Elizabeth, Wilfred Douglas and Myrtle Florence. Ragna Josephine, the mother of two children, Borghild Constance and John Calmer. Ida Caroline, mother of three children, Caroline Josephine died 1923, Laura Irene and Raymond Leonard. Peter Lewis, the parent of twins, Karline Jean and Mary Lois died 1925. Edward Bellewin, father of five children, Gladys Elizabeth, and Clarence Lyle, Cecil Loyd, died 1927, Earl died 1925 and Raymond. Otto, the father of one son, Glynomore.

The pioneer's present home is located in Township 147, Range 58, Section 16 of Griggs County. His present location is about a half mile across the river from his pioneer buildings. It is located near the bend of the Sheyenne River, with the river and the woods forming the background for his buildings.

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The following accounts of early conditions and happenings is written by the pioneer, John Hogenson.

Amund Nelson Opheim, also called Pioneer Nelson was the first settler in what is now called Washburn Township, and also the first settler in Griggs County. Mr. Opheim came from Winesheck County, Iowa in 1879, preceding all the other settlers in the Sheyenne Valley, and in what later became Griggs County, by one year. He entered government land on Section 12 of Washburn Township, twenty to twenty-five miles from the nearest settler or neighbor, built his log cabin covered with elm bark for roof, with no floor, moved his family in, then prepared for the winter.

The log house is still on the same place now, owned by his son, Nels Opheim, but it has changed its bark roof for one of shingles and its earthen floor to one of lumber. Some of the old pioneers would like very much to see the house preserved, either on the place or moved to the county seat and erected either on the Courthouse block or some other place in memory of the first pioneer family.

During the fall, they had been busy preparing shelter for themselves and their stock, not noticing that their provisions were shrinking every day, until winter came, when he had to start out for Grand Forks, eighty miles away, without a road, and twenty miles or more to the first house.

While he was gone, one of the Dakota blizzards came and he was laid up two weeks before he could return and the folks at home had to grind their own meal on the coffee mill.

In the spring of 1881, new settlers and land seekers came into this territory and the only place to go for a meal was Opheim's; and Mrs. Opheim, that noble and self-sacrificing woman, would work early and late to accommodate and feed the newcomers.

Mr. Opheim died after not many years, long before he could reap any benefit from his struggles in providing a home for himself and his loved ones. Mrs. Opheim lived many years and died in peace. They both rest in the cemetery which was laid out on their own land.

In 1880, came C. P. Bolkan, Amud Fluto, Oke Skren, Ole Havig and John Torfin, who took land in Washburn Township. Aren Luckason, John Atchison and Alex Sanders arrived the same year and took land in Sverdrup Township.

So far all the settlers were in the valley, strung along the river from the southern to the northern boundary of the county, not suspecting anyone would settle on the prairies. But the unexpected happened, and word was brought into the valley that someone with abundant financial strength had bought a large block of land on the prairie and would start preparations in the fall so as to be ready to turn the sod and begin active farming operations in the spring of 1881. Upon investigation the rumors were found to be true. The Cooper Brothers had actually purchased many thousand acres and were getting ready to operate their farms,



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which proved to be a great asset to the country in bringing more settlers and furnishing employment to those already here and to new arrivals.

Rollin C. Cooper was the manager of the Cooper Brothers' farms until it was dissolved by mutual consent. Besides his farming interest, he erected one of the first two grain elevators and personally operated them. He was one of the organizers of the Cooperstown-Sanborn and Turtle Mountain Railroad, and served as its president during its construction until it was completed as far as Cooperstown when it was sold to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company in the early eighties. Mr. Cooper, as well as his railroad project, aided materially in building up many public enterprises in the community. R. C. Cooper was the founder of the city of Cooperstown and it was named in the honor of the Cooper Brothers.

When Griggs County was formed from Trail and Foster Counties in 1881 and organized on June 10, 1881, R. C. Cooper was one of the County Commissioners, appointed June 16, 1882. The County Seat was located at Hope but in November, the same year, by a vote of the people it was moved to Cooperstown.

- Mr. Cooper has served the community in many important positions and has stood for right and justice. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1894, and to the Senate in 1898, serving one term in each branch of the legislature.

While a member of the house, he was chairman of the railroad committee and was a member of other important committees. He has always been a resident of Cooperstown and vicinity, except in later years when he has partly retired from business and found time to follow the wild goose south in the fall but returns in the spring. He is still active, though he has eighty-one years to his credit, and takes great interest in Griggs County which he has greatly helped and done his part in up-building.

In 1882, the railroad was completed to Hope and the preliminary survey pointed to Sheyenne. The townsites boomers came into the valley and located the town of Mardell on Section 13, land now owned by Nels Arneson, in Washburn Township. It sprung up like a mushroom and vanished almost as quickly as it came when it became evident that the projected railroad would not come that way.

Mardell had at one time a commodious hotel, two general stores, one hardware store and one drug store, land locaters to assist settlers in locating their claims and getting their filings recorded in the United States land office. Pettifogers, land sharks and everything that belongs to an orderly village, except a saloon which was at that time commonly the first need looked for in a new town.

The people of that town were prosperous and contented until it was found out they would miss the railroad. The road to Cooperstown at that time was nearing completion. Business men packed their goods, some moved to Cooperstown and others to Hope. Some of the buildings were still there but long before this they have been moved.

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There was a class of early pioneers, considered by many to be undesirable; later, however, many of them proved to be valuable assets to the population and a great asset in the development of the country and community. These early settlers I have in mind were a number of single young men who came from Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and other states, who imagined that a new country like this would be the proper place to get rich quick, start a farm and build a good home so the single blessedness could be removed sometime in the near future.

When they arrived, the first thing was to select their claims. Then they built their shack, moved in, then lived alone, doing their own cooking and washing, and by all appearances were quite contented. Some of them had prior experience in cooking but others did not although all of them did the best they could. Griddle cakes were an every day ration and their main item of subsistence.

But the bachelors, as well as others, soon discovered that this idea of getting rich quick and having a good farm and home and have the necessity for living in single blessedness removed, did not turn out at once; for crops, year after year, turned out to be of light yield because of draught, frost, hail and the destructiveness of the gophers. If any crop was harvested and saved, the money lender would appear and demand his pay. He had his cash invested at twelve percent and held a mortgage on the crop and personal property. Thus the paying or renewing at another twenty-two per cent of interest and commission demanded, it took time to get rich.

But some years later, prospects took a turn and times became bright, crops better, mortgages were removed from the properties, new acquaintances were made and the feminine sex had greatly increased among the settlers and many of the young men who were single, won their neighbor's daughter, providing she was willing to move into a dug-out or log cabin to spend their honeymoon.

These pioneers were the real builders of the country, and where their lowly shacks once stood, you will find beautiful farm homes, with modern conveniences and improvements, with grown-up sons and daughters, well contented and prosperous. Some of their sons are now out in Montana, Canada, and other places, having taken up their father's old trade in the flapjack factory.

Unlike many of the earlier day frontier settlements, Griggs County pioneers were saved from the murderous and torturous Indians. Aside from the remains of abandoned wigwams in the woods along the river and the spread of buffalo bones upon the prairie, there were no visible signs that the Indians had ever made this immediate country their home to any considerable extent or even their hunting grounds. Consequently, there never should have been any fear of the consequences of an uprising.

Nevertheless, stories were told and retold of how frontier settlements had been visited by the savages and how they had proceeded in their mission of ravaging and murderings. Fresh in the memory of those

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early Days was the Sioux massacre in Minnesota in 1862. Then in 1863 came the expedition of General Sibley through what is now Griggs County. He camped at Sibley Lake just south of Binford. The remains of his camp (Camp Sibley) are still to be seen. This camp was established to care for the sick and footsore soldiers before starting on in pursuit of the Indians that had traveled toward the Missouri River. The fate of the Custer expedition in Montana had barely ceased to be news when word came to our pioneers that a Manitoba Tribe of Indians were on the war path. In addition to all these rough reports a real danger was thought to exist because of the residence of Indians on a reservation near Devils Lake, practically at our very door.

All these stories with a few facts would naturally tend to create a feeling of uneasiness and restlessness especially on the part of those early pioneers who were nervously inclined. Imaginations were working overtime. There was constant fear that the cunning and treacherous savages would escape the watchfulness of the soldiers on the reservations and descend upon our settlement before any call could be made for help.

Under these conditions, it was an easy matter for alarmists to meet with success in building up some feeling of the settlers. The rumors and false stories broadcasted were many, and they always came from the North. In due time, the rumors took root in Cooperstown. Some of the citizens, taking the report very seriously, while others laughed at the notion of preparing for a possible attack by the Indians.

Cooperstown was wholly unprepared to make a substantial defense in the case of a possible attack. No fortifications had been thrown up and there were no arms and ammunition with which to undertake a successful defense in the case of a possible attack. However, a blacksmith by the name of Nels Kiel took it upon himself to see that something was done, even though the town authorities refused to be moved by the rumors of danger. With the thought in mind that there was no time to be lost and that something must be done at once, this blacksmith called upon the business men and others to finance his project.

With the financial end of the matter solved, the blacksmith proceeded to manufacture a crude canon and by the time the next rumor floated in the settlement, the defensive weapon was ready for action. It was mounted, I presume, on the outskirts of the town, probably upon what was then called Vinegar Hill, that little lift of ground to the north of the business section of Cooperstown. Near this canon the blacksmith stationed himself and kept a careful watch through the night, patrolling most faithfully, while other less nervous people slept.

One evening the self-appointed watchman reported that the enemy was camped north of town and that he observed objects dancing about the campfire. While the blacksmith stayed by his cannon to give aid when it was needed, some of the most daring of the citizens mounted their horses and rode in the direction of the supposed Indian Camp to investigate. Investigation disclosed that the campfire was nothing more than a burning straw stack and the dancing Indians proved to be sparks and shadows from the fire. As far as I know this was the last scare in Griggs County.

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The first white children born in Romness Township were two boys, Anton Olson, born January 31, 1881 and Elmer Matison, born May 17, 1881.

The first death known to have occurred among the pioneers in Griggs County was that of Mr. Ulven who was a victim of the severe weather in the winter of 1881.

Ulven had a claim up the Sheyenne River and during the summer, fall and into the winter, he was employed over in the Goose River settlement where he could earn some money and be in position to spend the balance of the winter "holding down his claim" as he called it.

During the winter, when Ulven left Goose River settlement for his claim, he headed in a westerly direction necessary, undertaking to walk the distance of twenty miles. There were no roads to guide him, nor were there any other guides, only the wide expanse of prairie. He lost his bearings on the trip and wandered that day and night and part of the next before he finally landed at the homestead of Ole Skren, which was just a short distance South and East of what is now known as the Bridge School on the Sheyenne River in Washburn Township.

Ulven was completely exhausted, his feet frozen, and he was in a delirious condition. Then mortification set in there and since the assistance of a doctor was not available to the pioneers in those days, he died in spite of all the Skren family could do. His remains were laid to rest in what was known as the Opheim Cemetery, he being the first pioneer settler buried in Griggs County.

The first election was held in Griggs County (at that time, it was part of Trail County) at the residence of Omund Nelson Opheim on November 2, 1880; although being a Presidential election, politics did not create much excitement mostly for the reason that North Dakota had a Territorial government. We had no "voice" in electing president, neither in choice of Territorial officers except a delegate to Congress. We were allowed to elect a Representative to the Territorial Legislature to be convened at Yankton in January, 1881.

Knute Nomland was elected to represent the district in the House of Representatives in the legislature; and county officers of Trail County were also elected at this election.

Nearly all pioneers, ten or twelve in number, attended the election, organized and elected Judges and Clerks as follows: Omund Nelson Opheim, Ole Johnson, Ole Skren, C. P. Bolkan, John Hogenson and John Dahl, the fifth officer is my memory does not fail me at this late date.

When the votes were canvassed, C. P. Bolkan was the candidate to carry the returns across the open prairie; no house for the first twenty miles over to the county seat being at Caledonia, located on the Red River about sixty miles away. Mr. Bolkan carried the ballots in a wooden box across the country by foot.

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Organization of Griggs County and the second election. Griggs County was named in honor of Captain Alexander Griggs, and formed from part of Trail and part of Foster Counties, February 18, 1881 and June 10, 1882.

Allen Breed, Rollin Cooper and William Clives were appointed County Commissioners by Governor Ordway, for the purpose of organizing the County Seat at Griggs County. The County Seat was located at Hope but moved to Cooperstown November 7, 1882, by the vote of the people.

On March 8, 1883, the legislature formed Steele County out of part of Trail County and the two eastern tiers of townships of Griggs County, leaving the latter at its present size.

When Griggs County was organized, the seat of Government was left at Hope although that place was located almost in the Southeastern corner. Soon thereafter Cooperstown was plotted as being a more central point and was naturally favored by the settlers in the western part, which led to contest for the removal of the county seat from Hope to Cooperstown.

During the campaign of 1882, Griggs County was divided into three election districts with polling places at Hope, Cooperstown, and Ottowa. The main issue was the moving of the County seat.

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The election was held and returns showed it was carried by Cooperstown with a handsome majority.

Then preparations were made to have the seat of government moved to Cooperstown but objections were made by some of the people of Hope. H. P. Smart, Register of Deeds and County Clerk was favoring Cooperstown and had possession of the principal records, which were taken over to Cooperstown during the night and placed in a granary under guard. Al Pinkerton, later sheriff, was one of the guardsmen. Several nights later, some of the Hope sportsmen came over, held up the guard and took the records away from them.

Then for a time Cooperstown, the County Seat, had a granary for a Courthouse. The offices were Register of Deeds, and the County Clerk, But they had no records.

Then plans were laid to apprehend, arrest and prosecute the perpetrators but sometime later the records were returned. This ends the County Seat controversy.

Early- Griggs County History  
as related

by John Hogenson, a pioneer of the county.

In 1879 came Omund Nelson Opheim from Iowa. He is considered by everyone the first settler in what is now Griggs County.

In 1880, came C.P. Bolkan, Amund Fluto, Ole Skren, Ole Havig and J. John Torfin, who took land in Washburn Tp. Arne Luckason, John Atchison and Alex Saunders arrived the same year and took land in Sverdrup Tp.

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In 1882, the railroad was completed to Hope and the preliminary survey pointed to Sheyenne River or valley. The townsite boomers came into the valley and located the town of Mardell on Sec. 13 in Washburn Tp. It sprung up like a mushroom and vanished almost as quickly as it came when it became evident that the projected railroad would not come that way. Mardell had at one time a commodious hotel, two general stores, one hardware store and a drug store besides land locators to assist settlers in locating their claims and getting their filings recorded in the U.S. land office. Pettifoggers, land sharks and everything that belongs to an orderly village, except a saloon which was at that time commonly the first thing looked for in a new town.

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There was one class of early pioneers, considered by many at that time to be undesirable; later, however, most of them proved to be valuable assets to the county and community. These early settlers I have in mind, were a number of single men who came from Iowa, Minnesota, Wisc. and other states, -who imagined that a new country like this would be the proper place to get "Rich quick", start a farm and build a good home so that single blessedness could be removed sometime in the near future. When they arrived, the first thing was to select their claims. They then built shacks, moved in, did their own cooking and washing, and by all appearances seemed quite content. Griddle cakes were an every day ration and their main item of subsistence. But the bachelors as well as many others, soon discovered that this idea of getting rich quick, having a good farm and home, and having the necessity for living in single blessedness removed did not materialize at once, for crops, year after year, turned out to be of light yield because of draught, frost, hail and the destructiveness of gophers. If any crop was harvested and saved, the money-lender would appear and demand his pay. He had his cash invested at 12 per cent and held a mortgage on the crop and personal property, thus the paying or renewing at another 22% of interest and commission demanded took a long time, and getting rich was a slow process.

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These pioneers were the real builders of the country and the county and where their lowly shacks once stood you will find beautiful farm homes, with modern improvements. Some of their sons have gone to Montana, Canada and other places, having taken up their father's old trade in the "Flapjack Factory".

Unlike many of the early day frontier settlements, Griggs county pioneers were saved from the murderous and torturous Indians. Aside from the remains of abandoned wigwams in the woods along the river and the spread of buffalo bones upon the prairie, there were no visible signs that the Indians had ever made this immediate county their home to any considerable extent.

The first death known to have occurred among the pioneers in Griggs county was that of I. Ulven who was a victim of severe weather in the winter of 1881. Mr. Ulven had a claim up the Sheyenne River and during the summer and fall and into the winter, he was employed in the Goose River settlement, where he could earn some money and be in a position to spend the balance of the winter "holding down his shack" as we called it. During the winter when Mr. Ulven left Goose River for his claim, he headed in a westerly direction, undertaking to walk the distance of 20 Mi. There were no roads to guide him, nor were there a

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Nearly all the pioneers, ten or twelve in number, attended the election, organized and elected Judges and Clerks as follows: Omund Nelson Opheim, Ole Johnson Skren, C.P. Balkan, John Hogenson and John Dahl.

When the votes were canvassed, C.P. Bolkan was the candidate chosen to carry the returns across the open prairie; no house for the first twenty miles over to the county seat which was at Caledonia, located on the Red River, about sixty miles away. Mr. Bolkan carried the ballots in a wooden box and crossed the country on foot.

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Cooperstown, North Dakota  
Resides in Bonneau Tp.  
November 12, 1938



JOHN HOGENSON; the popular postmaster of Romness, North Dakota, near where he conducts one of the finest farms in Griggs county, is a man of exceptional tact and is widely and favorably known as a citizen of true worth. He has acted as postmaster of that thriving town for the past ten years, and is one of the pioneer settlers of the county. He has passed through many pioneer hardships, and can review the early history of that region. His present home is one of the best located and most modern style of any in the township, and his farm in section 16, of Romness township, bears every evidence of careful tillage and modern methods.

Our subject was born on a farm in Norway, June 22, 1847, and was the only son and second child in a family of five children, born to Hogen and Martha (Johnson) Hogenson, both of whom were natives of Norway. His father was a farmer by occupation. Our subject lived in his native land until 1867 when he came to America, and located at Amherst, Fillmore county, Minnesota, where he worked at farming until he went to Griggs county, North Dakota, in the spring of 1880. He "squatted" on the place which he now owns and occupies, and filed a claim to the land in 1882. He is now the fortunate owner of four hundred acres of land, and he has made a success of his chosen calling. His farm is fully improved, and his residence is situated in a picturesque spot on the banks of the Sheyenne river. It is a substantial structure of modern architecture, as are all of the buildings on the place, and altogether the estate presents a pleasing appearance.

Our subject was married in Fillmore county, Minnesota, in 1876, to Miss Karen Vestern. Mrs. Hogensen was born in Norway, December 23, 1855, and came to Fillmore county, Minnesota, when a girl aged twelve years. She is a daughter of Erick and Bertha Vestern. Nine children have been born to Mr. and Mrs. Hogensen, as follows: Helen, Edward, Clara, Josephine, Louis, Joseph, Ida, Otto and August. The two eldest children were born in Minnesota, and the other children in North Dakota. Helen, the eldest daughter, is now Mrs. Ole Anderson, and resides in Wells County, North Dakota. Mr. Hogenson is prominent in public affairs, and served three years on the board of county commissioners, having been elected to that office on the Republican ticket. He has also been clerk of the township in which he resides continuously since its organization, and has served as clerk of the school district. He has met with unbounded success and is recognized as a leading citizen. In political faith he is a Populist, and is a man who is strong in his convictions for right.

John Hogenson, the pioneer of Griggs County, was born in Asperusten, a tenant farm, (Husmandsplads) in the parish of Aamot, Osterdalen, Norway, June 19, 1847.

His parents were Martha and Hogen Asprusten. In Norway, the pioneer's name was John Hogenson Asprusten.

Up to the age of nineteen years, he helped his father on the farm, during part of the winter in the lumber woods, and often during the summer driving logs on the Rena and other rivers. In the year of 1867, his father died and the same year about the first of May, he immigrated to America to better his condition.

In the mountainous regions of Norway, making a living was accomplished with much hardship and having heard of the golden opportunities in America, he decided to follow the call of his heart and to seek the land of milk and honey.

The pioneer decided to go to Minnesota, instead of any other state in the union, because his cousin Hogen Johnson who left about two years previously, sent letters from Winona, Minnesota to Mr. Hogenson in Norway, telling in particular about the state in which he dwelt.

He immigrated to America about the first of May, 1867, with his cousin, Martin Johnson, and his mother, Mrs. Oliane Johnson. The trip was made on the sailship, Refondo and was piloted by Captain Harris. The journey took six weeks and three days from Christiania (Oslo), Norway, to Quebec, Canada. During the trip, fifteen deaths occurred and after the corpses were prepared for burial, a brief service was conducted by the captain and the bodies were sunk into the ocean depths.

After arriving in Quebec, the journey was continued by rail and as was common in those early days, the only accommodation for immigrants were box cars equipped with planks around the walls for seats. They journeyed to the United States boundary to a point on Lake Huron, where the passengers embarked on a lake steamer. They were packed together as close as possible on the main deck among bales and boxes of merchandise

with no bedding or beds. When they got too tired standing up, the only way to get rest was to lie down on the desk floor. In about thirty-six they landed in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, continued from this place by rail to LaCrosse, Wisconsin, then on a steamer on the Mississippi River to Winona, Minnesota, which ended their journey.

In company with his cousin, Martin Johnson, and his mother, they landed in Winona, Minnesota, in June, 1867, without friends, acquaintances, or even relatives at the time, no money, no knowledge of the English language, a condition which would not be envied by any citizen. However, though these conditions were hard to meet, they soon overcame them. It was summer and as they were brought up to bear hardships in their early training in the lumber woods or other vocations in the mountain regions, they conceived the idea at once that they could use any bush for shelter. They had a few provisions left from the trip so they could manage to get along a few days while seeking employment.

The next day, after arriving in Winona, Minnesota, they met a farmer, Andrew Larson, from Highland Prairie, Fillmore county, Minnesota, who asked Mr. Hogenson to come home with him and he would try to help him. He worked for Hohl, three days and was paid one dollar, which was the most valued dollar, he had ever possessed. The next day, he went south and came to Sylfest Topness, and he hired himself for two months and received twenty-five dollars.

In the township of Amherst, he made his home for thirteen years, working around for the farmers and in the Wisconsin timbers for two winters. In 1868, he worked on the railroad grading, west of Rushford, and the following year west of Lansboro.

His mother, Mrs. Martha Asprusten, came from Norway to Minnesota in 1872. They lived together till 1876, when the pioneer was married.

He married Karen Wester, who was born on a farm called Western in the parish of Lunner, Hadeland, Norway, on the twenty-third day of December, 1855. She came to America with her parents Bertha Rustad and Irik Western, and five sisters in 1868.

Mr. and Mrs. John Hogenson were married by Rev. Kr. Magelson at the parsonage in Highland Prairie, Fillmore County, Minnesota, on the seventeenth day of February, 1876.

They lived four years in Amherst, when they took Horace Greeley's advice; "Go west, young man and woman, to make a home for yourself and your loved ones." In the spring of 1880, Mr. Hogenson left Fillmore Country for the Wild West, previously informed by his friend, Peter Mathison, who had been employed with the government surveyors, that the northern part of Barnes County, what is not Griggs County, was to his judgment the right place for an ideal home. Mr. Hogenson looked for timber, water and plenty of hay, which he found within a short time. He arrived at Valley City, the twenty-third of April, 1880, by railroad. The next day, he started from there by foot, arriving that day at Sibley crossing. During the night a heavy snowfall came which made traveling harder. He borrowed a pair of skees and made use of them as far as where Martin Ueland's place is now. The following night, he camped on the banks of the Sheyenne River not far from where Torkel Njaa resides now. Mr. Hogenson arrived April 26, 1880 at Amund Nelson Opheim's home. On April 27th, he arrived at his present location, which has been his home in Romness Township ever since. This ends his first trip to Griggs County.

During this trip, his friends, Peter Mathison met him here at his present location. They built a log hut on Section sixteen, broke five acres and put up some hay, and made some preparations for the coming winter.

During their first trip, the first postoffice in Griggs County was established in the summer of 1880, located on Section eight, Township one hundred forty-seven, Range fifty-eight, later named Romness Township, on land now owned by Seval Friswold. The postoffice was named Furham. Frank Taper was the appointed postmaster and his sister, Mrs. Durham, as an assistant. That office was discontinued in a year or two; and another postoffice called Lybeck was established on Section twenty-five, with Andrew, C Knudson as the postmaster.

The mail was hauled from Newburg, Near Hatton, and later a route was established from Valley City to Pembina.

In connection with Durham Postoffice, Mr. Hogenson related the following incident or experience that came under their observation during the summer of 1880.

"While Mr. Taper was postmaster, Mr. Durham and his wife lived with him in the same house. One evening in the summer of 1880, Mr. Taper and Mr. Durham had some trouble, and according to Taper's story, Mr. Durham drove him off from the place with a gun, although, he managed to take with him the contents of the postoffice which consisted of a few letters."

"At that time, Peter Mathison, Martin Johnson and myself camped on our place; and late in the evening, Mr. Taper arrived with a gunny sack and some contents, telling the story about the trouble and saying he was going to leave the country and would take the postoffice down to Opheim's. In these early days, we thought a postoffice would be a great asset to a community, although we did not want the office and could not at the time, well take care of it. Se objected to letting it go down eight miles from us. After some persuasion he left the office with us. Frank Taper went away and I have never seen him since.

"Mr. Mathison and myself had to go back to Minnesota for our families. During the evening and night, we instructed Martin Johnson, so he could act as postmaster, while we were absent. Mr. Johnson's tenure as a head of the first postoffice in Griggs County did not last very long.

"The next day, Mr. Durham and his wife, mounted on horses and each carrying a six shooter, arrived on our ground, and expressed themselves in a language which would not look well in print, that there would be trouble about the postoffice. As we did not want the postoffice, expressing ourselves in favor of its being at their place, and as Mrs. Durhan was assistant, she was the person that should have it, they went home, using a more pleasant language than when they came."

This incident will show that the postoffice in early days could be

moved without any government consent.

During his trips in 1880, through the summer of the same year, the following settlers arrived in Romness Township: Ole B. Olson and his sons, Gilbert, Bernt, Martin and Theodore, from Iowa; Andrew C. Knudson, from Wisconsin; Mrs. Anna Nelson and her sons, Andrew and Nels, and her daughter Marie, from Iowa; John E. Qualey, from Minnesota; John Dahl, from Iowa; Martin Johnson, from Minnesota; and Iver Siem, from Iowa, settling across the line in Steel County. This completed the settlement in 1880.

Mr. Mathison and Mr. Hogenson returned to Minnesota in the latter part of July. During the summer months, they worked out in harvesting and made preparation to move their families and property to their new location.

On September 1, 1880, he started back overland with a yoke of oxen hitched to a prairie schooner in company with his wife and two children (Hellene and Edward), Peter Mathison and wife. They drove twenty-six head of sheep and sixteen head of cattle, and covered a distance of about twenty miles a day. They went through Rochester, Zumbrota, Canon Falls to St. Paul, Minnesota. Passing through the main street of St. Paul the sheep crowded on on the street car track so the horse-drawn car had to stop for the sheep to move forward. They continued the journey through St. Cloud, Alexandria, Fergus Falls and to Fargo, which was only a small village at that time. From Fargo, they came across country through the present site of Hillsboro and Mayville, from there to Golden Lake in Steel County, where the last settlers were found. From there or part of the way, they were guided by Mount Franklin in Romness Township and other hills near their place. They arrived at their homestead on September 30, 1880, covering a distance of approximately six hundred miles. Directly after his arrival, he made two trips to Valley City, a distance of fifty miles, with his yoke of oxen, for supplies and provisions. It took him five to six days to make the trip.

Nearly all the first settlers established their homes in the timber close to the river, not suspecting the threatening floods that endangered them when the Sheyenne River would be swelled by spring thaws.

During the winter of 1880-1881, a heavy snowfall averaging about three feet on the level, had fallen. In the spring, the snow melted and swelled the river, naturally flooding the lowlands. John Hogenson, being one of the settlers trapped by the waters, narrates the following experience:

"One afternoon I noticed the waters rising gradually and before night it was over the top of the banks, so we made preparations immediately to move to higher land. We had a tent, which we pitched up and moved the family into, drove the cattle out, but left the sheep. A settler by the name of Martin Johnson agreed to remain in the log hut during the night. A gun was left in his charge with the instructions for him to discharge it in case the flood should threaten the place."

"Mr. Johnson had arrived earlier in the day from a long tramp through the snow and slush from Valley City, and being weary and tired, thought a good bed and some sleep would be a rare treat for him. During the night we were watching the water and noticed it rising gradually, but heard no report from Mr. Johnson. As soon as daylight broke in the morning, we hitched up a yoke of oxen to a wagon and made the trip to the log hut. We peeped through the window and saw the water reaching nearly up to the bottom of his bed, and Mr. Johnson sound asleep. We awakened him, and much to his surprise, he found himself surrounded by water, he had to plunge right into it to get out of the hut. We rushed about to get the sheep moved and also some of the household goods. Among the articles, I noticed a sack of flour which I went to get, and not being aware of the trap door leading to the cellar had floated up, I accidentally stepped into the opening and in I went, flour and all.

During the flood, their provisions commenced to run low. They still had some coffee, flour and syrup in their possession but they were fifty miles from town, and water everywhere around them, the higher land being the only dry place. They had to "skimp" along until the water would sink down so they could go to town for provisions.

The following incident happened in the spring of 1881.

One day a starved hunter, Mr. Matt, came along and wanted to board with Mr. Hogenson. He had a gun and some ammunition along. As their meat supply was almost gone, they promised to help him out, providing he would get some meat for them. He promised to do all he could, although game was not plentiful at that time of the year. He shot a couple of prairie chickens the first few days. However, one morning when the meat supply was gone (Mr. Hogenson believed it was providence that sent it) a large, lonely goose came soaring in the air, looking for a place to settle down. When the goose came over a bluff east of their location, she must have noticed a small lake formed by the melting snow close to their camp, and there she settled down. Mr. Matt got his gun and started off, remarking, "There's a dead goose." This was true enough for as soon as they heard the report of the gun, the goose flopped her wings and could move no more. The next thing was to get the bird on dry land without getting too wet. At the time, Mr. Hogenson had an ox which they had trained for riding bareback, so he got the ox and started out to get the goose on the small lake. When he came close to the bird and reached for it, the ox became frightened and started to do some broncho stunts, flopping Mr. Hogenson off into the water. The ox made for the shore and Mr. Hogenson picked up the goose and started for camp. Soon preparations were made to get the goose roaster. Mr. Hogenson remarked that they would have a "real" feast for once, and they amused themselves over their first hunting experience in Romness Township.

These and other experiences, both laughable and serious, were had by the early pioneers. Many a pleasant and interesting moment has the pioneer spent recalling past memories of the sacrifices and trials they went through in order to make an easier pathway for the coming generation, and their community a happier and more cheerful place in which to dwell.

Mr. Hogenson's early farm machinery was an old fashioned walking plow and a wooden harrow; oxen were used for power.

He bought his first horses in the year of 1883.



The early crops were wheat and oats. The first year, five acres of wheat was not very good due to his poor farming. The following year the yield was thirty bushels to the acre of wheat.

The fuel in early days was wood, which they got from the timber near their location.

The first school of Romness Township was built in 1883; located on Section fourteen. The teacher was Mr. Markwood.

In the early part of the pioneer days, they did not have churches but held the services in the different homes. Mr. Rev. Vaage was the first traveling preacher.

In 1882, the first church congregation was organized by Rev. J. Lundeby. They built a church in 1897 located on section twenty-two. The congregation named the church Ringsaker, having Rev. O. K. Quamme as their pastor.

Mr. Hogenson served as postmaster from 1887 to 1904. He was appointed postmaster of Romness Township during the year 1887. The Romness postoffice was established a few years earlier with Peter Mathison as postmaster. In 1887, In 1887, he was elected County Commissioner for one term. also acted as town and school clerk for many years. He took an active part in organizing and establishing the Romness Methodist Church of which, he has been a member since it first started. He has always been ready to help in worthy causes for moral uplift of the community.

Mr. and Mrs. John Hogenson have spent forty-seven years in Romness Township and can recall many hardships and pleasant memories of their pioneer days.

They have had nine children in all, of whom seven are still living: Edward Bellewin, Van Couv er, British Columbia; Ragna Josephine (Mrs. Carl Bue), Peter Lewis and August Nicolae, Cooperstown, North Dakota; Henry Josehp and Otto Melvin, Portland, Oregon; and Ida Caroline (Mrs. Lawrence Stenbro,) Aneta, North Dakota. The other two, who passes away are Hellene Mathilde (Mrs. Ole Anderson) in 1924; and Clara Julia in 1908.

They have been the grandparents of twenty-three grandchildren in all of who eighteen are still living. Hellene Mathilde was the mother of ten children, John Oliver, Lillian Kathleen, Elmer Spencer, Marion Henriette, Clara Alice, Arthur Lewis, Ruth Irene, Ida Elizabeth, Wilfred Douglas and Myrtle Florence. Ragna Josephine, the mother of two children, Borghild Constance and John Calmer. Ida Caroline, mother of three children, Caloline Josephine died 1923, Laura Irene and Raymond Leonard. Peter Lewis, the parent of twins, Karline Jean and Mary Lois died 1925. Edward Bellvin, father of five children, Gladys Elizabeth, and Clarence Lyle, Cecil Loyd, died 1927, Earl died 1925 and Raymond. Otto, the father of one son, Glynomore.

The pioneer's present home is located Township one hundred forty-seven, range 58, section 16 of Griggs County. His present location is about a half mile across the river from his pioneer buildings. It is located near the bend of the Sheyenne River, with the river and the woods forming the background for his buildings.

The following accounts of early conditions and happenings is written by the Pioneer, John Hogenson.

Amund Nelson Opheim, also called Pioneer Nelson was the first settler in what is not called Washburn Township, and also the first settler in Griggs County. Mr. Opheim came from Winesheck County, Iowa in 1879, preceding all the other settlers in the Sheyenne Valley, and in what later became Griggs County, by one year. He entered government land on Section 12 of Washburn Township, twenty to twenty-five miles from the nearest settler or neighbor, built his log cabin covered with elm bark for roof, with no floor, moved his family in then prepared for the winter.

The log house is still on the same place now, owned by his son Nels Opheim, but it has changed its bark roof for one of shingles and its earthen floor to one of lumber. Some of the old pioneers would like very much to see the house preserved, either on the place or moved to the country seat and erected either on the Courthouse block or some other place in memory of the first pioneer family. *(Cabin moved to Cooperstown in July, 1932 - M.H.)*

During the fall, they had been busy preparing shelter for themselves and their stock, not noticing that their provisions were shrinking every day, until winter came, when he had to start out for Grand Forks, eighty miles away, without a road, and twenty miles or more to the first house.

While he was gone, one of the Dakota blizzards came and he was laid up two weeks before he could return and the folks at home had to grind their own meal on the coffee mill.

In the spring of 1881, new settlers and land seekers came into this territory and the only place to go for a meal was Opheim's; and Mrs. Opheim, that noble and self-sacrificing woman, would work early and late to accomodate and feed the newcomers.

Mr. Opheim died after not many years, long before he could reap any benefit from his struggles in providing a home for himself and his loved ones. Mrs. Opheim lived many years and died in peace. They both rest in the cemetary which was laid our on their own land.

In 1880, came C. P. Balkan, Amud Fluto, Oke Skren, Ole Havig and John Torfin, who took land in Washburn Township. Aren Luckason, John Atchison and Alex Sanders arrived the same year and took land in Sverdrup Township.

So far all the settlers were in the valley, strung along the river from the southern to the norther boundary of the county, not suspecting anyone would settle on the prairies. But the unexpected happend, and word was brought into the valley that someone with abundant financial strength had bought a large block of land on the prairie and would start preparations in the fall so as to be ready to turn the sod and begin active farming operations in the spring of 1881. Upon investigation the rumors were found to be true. The Cooper Brothers had actually purchased many thousand acres and were getting ready to operate their farms, which proved to be a great asset to the country in bring ing more settlers and furnishing employment to those already here and to new arrivals.

Rollin C. Cooper was the manager of the Cooper Brothers farms until

it was dissolved by mutual consent. Besides his farming interest, he erected one of the first two grain elevators and personally operated them. He was one of the organizers of the Cooperstown-Sanborn and Turtle Mountain Railroad, and served as its president during its construction until it was completed as far as Cooperstown when it was sold to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company in the early eighties. Mr Cooper as well as his railroad project aided materially in building up many public enterprises in the community. R. C. Cooper was the founder of the City of Cooperstown and it was named in the honor of the Cooper Brothers.

When Griggs County was formed from Trail and Foster Counties in 1881 and organized on June 10, 1881, R. C. Cooper was one of the County Commissioners, appointed June 16, 1882. The County Seat was located at Hope but in November, the same year, by a vote of the people it was moved to Cooperstown.

Mr. Cooper has served the community in many important positions and has stood for right and justice. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1894, and to the Senate in 1898, serving one term in each branch of the legislature.

While a member of the house, he was chairman of the railroad committee and was a member of other important committees. He has always been a resident of Cooperstown and vicinity, except in later years when he has partly retired from business and found time to follow the wild goose south in the fall but returns in the spring. He is still active, though he has eighty-one years to his credit, and takes great interest in Griggs County which he has greatly helped and done his part in upbuilding.

In 1882, the railroad was completed to Hope and the preliminary survey pointed to Sheyenne. The townsites boomers came into the valley and located the town of Mardell on Section 13, land now owned by Nels Arneson, in Washburn Township. It sprung up like a mushroom and vanished almost as quickly as it came when it became evident that the projected railroad would not come that way.

Mardell had at one time a commodious hotel, two general stores, one

Never these dates

hardware store and one drug store, land locaters to assist settlers in locating their claims and getting their filings recorded in the United States land office. Pettifogers, land sharks and everything that belongs to an orderly village, except a saloon which was at that time the commonly the first need looked for in a new town.

The people of that town were prosperous and contented until it was found out they would miss the railroad. The road to Cooperstown at that time was nearing completion. Business men packed their goods, some moved to Cooperstown and others to Hope. Some of the buildings were still there but long before this they have been moved.

There was a class of early pioneers, considered by many to be undesirable; later, however, many of them proved to be valuable assets to the population and a great asset in the development of the country and community. These early settlers I have in mind were a number of single young men who came from Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and other states, who imagined that a new country like this would be the proper place to get rich quick, start a farm and build a good home so the single blessedness could be removed sometime in the near future.

When they arrived, the first thing was to select their claims. Then they built their shack, moved in, then lived alone, doing their own cooking and washing, and by all appearances were quite contented. Some of them had prior experience in cooking but others did not although all of them did the best they could. Griddle cakes were an every day ration and their main item of subsistance.

But the backelors, as well as others, soon discovered that this idea of getting rich quick and having a good farm and home and have the necessity for living in single blessedness removed, did not turn out at once; for crops, year after year, turned out to be of light yield because of draught, brost, hail and the destructiveness of the gophers. If any crop was harvested and saved, the money lender would appear and demand his pay. He had his cash invested at twelve percent and held a mortgagae on the crop and personal property. Thus the paying or renewing at

at another twenty-two per cent of interest and commission demanded, it took time to get rich.

But some years later, prospects took a turn and times became bright, crops better, mortgages were removed from the properties, new acquaintances were made and the feminine sex had greatly increased among the settlers and many of the young men who were single, won their neighbor's daughter, providing she was willing to move into a dug-out or log cabin to spend their honeymoon.

These pioneers were the real builders of the country, and where their lowly shacks once stood, you will now find beautiful farm homes, with modern conveniences and improvements, with grown-up sons and daughters, well contented and prosperous. Some of their sons are now out in Montana, Canada, and other places, having taken up their father's old trade in the flapjack factory.

Unlike many of the earlier day frontier settlements, Griggs County pioneers were saved from the murderous and torturous Indians. Aside from the remains of abandoned wigwams in the woods along the river and the spread of buffalo bones upon the prairie, there were no visible signs that the Indians had ever made this immediate country their home to any considerable extent or even their hunting grounds. Consequently, there never should have been any fear of the consequences of an uprising.

Nevertheless, stories were told and retold of how frontier settlements had been visited by the savages and how they had proceeded in their mission of ravaging and murders. Fresh in the memory of those early days was the Sioux massacre in Minnesota in 1862. Then in 1863 came the expedition of General Sibley through what is now Griggs County. He camped at Sibley Lake just south of Binford. The remains of his camp (Camp Sibley) are still to be seen. This camp was established to care for the sick and footsore soldiers before starting on in pursuit of the Indians that had traveled toward the Missouri River. The fate of the Cluster expedition in Montana had barely ceased to be news when word came to our

pioneers that a Manitoba Tribe of Indians were on the war path. In  
addi  
addition to all these rough reports a real danger was thought to exist  
because of the residence of Indians on a reservation near Devils Lake,  
practically at our very door.

All these stories with a few facts would naturally tend to create a  
feeling of uneasiness and restlessness especially on the part of those  
early pioneers who were nervously inclined. Imaginations were working  
overtime. There was constant fear that the cunning and treacherous  
savages would escape the watchfulness of the soldiers on the reservations  
and descend upon our settlement before any call could be made for help.

Under these conditions, it was an easy matter for alarmists to meet  
with success in building up some feeling of the settlers. The rumors  
and false stories broadcasted were many, and they always came from the  
North. In due time, the rumors took root in Cooperstown. Some of the  
citizens, taking the report very seriously, while others laughed at the  
notion of preparing for a possible attack by the Indians.

Cooperstown was wholly unprepared to make a substantial defense in  
the case of a possible attack. No fortifications had been thrown up  
and there were no arms and ammunition with which to undertake a success-  
ful defense in the case of a possible attack. However, a blacksmith by  
the name of Nels Kiel took it upon himself to see that something was done,  
even though the town authorities refused to be moved by the rumors of  
danger. With the thought in mind that there was no time to be lost and  
that something must be done at once, this blacksmith called upon the  
businessmen and others to finance his project.

With the financial end of the matter solved, the blacksmith proceed-  
ed to manufacture a crude canon and by the time the next rumor floated  
in the settlement, the defensive weapon was ready for action. It was  
mounted, I presume, on the outskirts of the town, probably upon what  
was then called Vinegar Hill, that little lift of ground to the north of  
the business section of Cooperstown. Near this canon the blacksmith  
stationed himself and kept a careful watch through the night, patrolling

most faithfully, while other less nervous people slept.

One evening the self-appointed watchman reported that the enemy was camped north of town and that he observed objects dancing about the campfire. While the blacksmith stayed by his cannon to give aid when it was needed, some of the most daring of the citizens mounted their horses and rode in the direction of the supposed Indian Camp to investigate.

Investigation disclosed that the campfire was nothing more than a burning straw stacks and the dancing Indians proved to be sparks and shadows from the fire. As far as I know why this was the last scare in Griggs County.

The first white children born in Romness Township was a boy, Anton Olson, born January 31, 1881 and Elmer Matison born May 17, 1881.

The first death known to have occurred among the pioneers in Griggs County was that of Mr. Ulven who was a victim of the severe weather in the winter of 1881.

Ulven had a claim up the Sheyenne River and during the summer, fall and into the winter, why he was employed over in the Goose River settlement where he could earn some money and be in position to spend the balance of the winter "holding down his claim" as he called it.

During the winter, when Ulven left Goose River settlement for his claim, he headed in a westerly direction necessary, undertaking to walk the distance of twenty miles. There were no roads to guide him, nor were there any other guides, only the wide expanse of prairie. He lost his bearings on the trip and wandered that day and night and part of the next before he finally landed at the homestead of Ole Skren, which was just a short distance South and East of what is not know as the Bridge School on the Sheyenne River in Washburn Township.

Ulven was completely exhausted, his feet frozen, and he was in a delirious condition. Then mortification set in there and since the assistance of a doctor was not available to the pioneers in those days, he died in spite of all the Skren family could do. His remains were laid to rest in what was known as the Opheim Cemetary, he being the first pioneer settler burined in Griggs County.



The first election was held in Griggs County (at that time, it was part of Trail County) at the residence of Omund Nelson Opheim on November 2, 1880; although being a Presidential election, politics did not create much excitement mostly for the reason that North Dakota had a Territorial government. We had no "voice" in electing president, neither in choice of Territorial officers except a delegate to Congress. We were allowed to elect a Representative to the Territorial Legislature to be convened at Yankton in January, 1881.

Knute Nomland was elected to represent the district in the House of Representatives in the legislature; and county officers of Trail County were also elected at this election.

Nearly all pioneers, ten or twelve in number, attended the election, organized and elected Judges and Clerks as follows: Omund Nelson Opheim, Ole Johnson, Skren, C. P. Balkan, John Hogenson and John Dahl, the fifth officer in my memory does not fail me at this late date.

When the votes were canvassed, C. P. Balkan was the candidate to carry the returns across the open prairie; no house for the first twenty miles over to the county seat being at Caedonia, located on the Red River about sixty miles away. Mr. Balkan carried the ballots in a wooden box across the country by foot.

Organization of Griggs County and the second election. Griggs County was named in honor of Captain Alexander Griggs, and formed from part of Trail and part of Foster Counties, February 18, 1881 and June 10, 1882,

Allen Breed, Rollin Cooper and William Clives was appointed County commissioners by Governor Ordway, for the purpose of organizing the County Seat at Griggs County. The County Seat was located at Hope but moved to Cooperstown November 7, 1882, but the vote of the people.

On March 8, 1883, the legislature formed Steele County out of part of Trail County and the two eastern tiers of townships of Griggs County, leaving the latter at its present size.

When Griggs County was organized, the seat of Government was left at Hope although that place was located almost in the Southeastern corner.

Soon thereafter Cooperstown was plotted as being a more central point and was naturally favored by the settlers in the western part, which lead contest for the removal of the county seat from Hope to Cooperstown.

During the campaign of 1882, Griggs County was divided into three election districts with polling places at Hope, Cooperstown, and Ottawa. The main issue was the moving of the county Seat.

Interested parties on both sides made preparations to carry the election and many rumors circulated during the campaign before and after the election what each party had undertaken. It was said that Hope parties hired thirty idle men from a neighboring county, fed and paid them for thirty days so as to make them legal voters. At the eve of election, men went over to ~~Hope~~ Hope from Cooperstown to persuade them to vote for Cooperstown which the return of the election proved to contain some truth by the handsome vote Cooperstown received in that precinct. Many other cunning stories besides these were told to "beat" the other party. "Fire water" was freely used in some quarters.

The election was held and returns showed it was carried by Cooperstown with a handsome majority.

Then preparations were made to have the seat of government moved to Cooperstown but objections were made by some of the people of Hope. H. P. Smart, Register of Deeds and County Clerk was favoring Cooperstown and had possession of the principal records, which were taken over to Cooperstown during the night and placed in a granary under ground. Al Pinkerton, later sheriff, was one of the guardsmen. Several nights later, some of the Hope sportsmen over, held up the guard and took the records away from them.

Then for a time Cooperstown, the County Seat, had a granary for a Courthouse. The offices was Register of Deeds, and the County Clerk, but they had no records.

Then plans were laid to apprehend, arrest and prosecute the perpetrators but sometime later the records were returned. This ends the County Seat controversy.