

Biography of Peter Idsvoog  
--Cora J. Johnson

Peter Idsvoog came to Cooperstown, North Dakota from Wisconsin in the year of 1886 with the intention of visiting an uncle here. However, he liked it very much in Dakota and decided to make his home here.

Mr. Idsvoog's work during his first year here was chiefly painting in and around Cooperstown. The town at that time was not so advanced and as large as it is at the present time. There was a general merchandise store where the theater is now, for at that time there were no motion picture shows here.

The Presbyterian Church was the only church here until the Methodist Church was built. The Baptist Church was at one time what the Bethlehem Church is now. The Lutheran Church was built in 1897 and the first minister was O. K. Quamme. A wooden schoolhouse took the place of the one we have now which was also located where the high school is at present.

In 1887 Mr. Idsvoog contested on a homestead in Ronness Township, beginning with three oxen and a walking plow. The grain wheat and oats were put in on share. An old style McCormick binder was used to reap the grain. Steam engines were used for threshing, but there were many horse power machines too. The house and barn were built of logs and the following year a new house was built.

It was ten miles to Cooperstown, which was their nearest town. Since the oxen and wagon were the only means of transportation it took about three hours to get to town. There were no automobiles at that time. If there had been they could not have been used anyway because of the condition of the roads which were merely paths angling in and out over the prairie.

In 1888 three horses were purchased and later a second hand, one-cylinder car, resembling a buggy and costing \$600. The products were cheap but products bought were also cheap. Butter was sold for 8 to 10¢ a pound, eggs for 6 to 10¢ a dozen; coffee could be bought ten pounds for a dollar. Calico was five cents a yard, used very much for dresses; lawn used for the best dresses. Hired help was also cheap, \$20 to \$25 a month for eight months and \$1.50 a day during threshing.

Wheat was sold from 38¢ a bushel to \$1.38 a bushel. Some corn was raised, but wheat was the chief crop. Taxes are about four times large now as they were then. Land could be bought for \$5 an acre.

In 1904, Mr. Idsvoog came to Cooperstown, later making his home in Binford, North Dakota where he operated a store. After a time he moved back to Cooperstown where he has made his home since. Now he supervises his farms, having fourteen hundred acres of land in Steele and Griggs County.

Mr. Idsvoog says there were better times years back--people were not in debt as they are now and the cost of living was not so high. Even though there was very little amusement, the neighbors would get together in their log houses and have a merry time. The homes were not always of the luxurious type, but the hearts of the people made up for that.