

Biography of Carl E. Erickson
--Elizabeth Peterson

June 2, 1926

Early when files for homesteads were being made in North Dakota, people emigrated from many lands. Coming to America, they heard of rich lands of the West and came here to build homes and help raise America's future citizens.

One of these early settlers was Carl Erickson. He was born on a small farm near Stockholm, Sweden, June 13, 1855. His early life was spent there with his parents, Mr. and *Mrs. Erick Person, and four brothers and sisters.

At twenty-six years of age he married Marie Johnson, a neighbor's girl. This step meant added money and conditions were poor financially, so they decided to go to America. He too had heard of the many people who went there and prospered, and this served to encourage his growing ambition.

He crossed the Atlantic alone in 1882 as his wife could not leave at the time with her small child. She joined him, however, in six months, coming to Moorehead with her brother.

They lived in Moorehead for four years. Mr. Erickson worked in a brick yard for a large concern. This work did not satisfy him, notwithstanding the change to city life, and he thought he would fare better if he filed a homestead. All the land around Moorehead and Fargo was taken up, and he was compelled to go over a hundred miles northwestward.

This does not seem very long ago, but there were no cars and trains were too expensive to travel in or ship any equipment. Mr. Erickson made the trip in a covered wagon with his wife and two daughters, his first son having died shortly after their arrival in Moorehead. The journey lasted two weeks. They moved some household furniture and led two cows all the way, necessitating very slow progress.

Their destination was reached finally, on June 25th. There were no buildings on the land, and they camped in the open (as they had done on the trip) until a house was built. He did not build it of logs but used pine boards which were not so expensive. The house completed contained but a single room, however, and it is clear that he, like most pioneers, was of limited means.

Their nearest town was Cooperstown, a twenty-five mile drive. Mr. Erickson went there only for supplies and once a year to pay taxes. He farmed one-fourth of a section of land at first but continued to accumulate more year by year.

Wheat mostly was raised by him as well as the neighboring farmers as it was profitable. Of course, oats had to be used to feed the oxen that were used instead of horses. The prices of grain varied from thirty-eight cents to a dollar a bushel and as now could not be depended on.

* Note here how the son formed his name by taking his father's given name and by adding "son" formed his surname.

Diversified farming was not the rule so after all, they did not prosper as well as they might have done.

The neighbors in that immediate vicinity lived but one-half a mile away. They were Charles Helling and Andrew Anderson. There were no community gatherings, however, and enjoyment was had when the neighbors visited each other.

Three girls were added to the Erickson family in successive years but trouble was not long denied them. Mrs. Erickson died April 8, 1894 from an illness of several months duration. At the time of this catastrophe the girls were not all capable of taking care of themselves. Two neighbors, old friends of the family, then adopted the two youngest so they could fare better, even though it broke up the family. Mr. Erickson lived without a wife but for two years after this. Then in February he was wed to Augusta Ness of Fargo. She had been working in private homes prior to her marriage, but then she came to the farm with him and tried to be a mother for the girls.

Sorrow in one thing often means luck in another. Mr. Erickson soon prospered financially and built a new home a mile farther west. It stormed so badly, however, that he could not complete it until a season later than he had planned and they lost a year on the new place.

Eleven children were born in this home, but Mr. Erickson did not relapse financially nevertheless and in 1916 a still better abode went up. It was large and equipped with modern conveniences, quite a change from a one room shack which had housed them in the beginning.

But Mr. Erickson lived only a month after the house was completed. A paralytic stroke affected him, and he passed away after a few days' illness.

His two oldest boys were now almost grown up so they continued the farm work. Both of them married a few years later and then the oldest stayed home. Mr. Erickson had left seven quarters and it was quite a task.

Mrs. Erickson lived six years after her husband's death. Then she was afflicted with apoplexy and died, leaving ten children. The oldest, Oscar is married and lives on a farm. He has three children, two boys and a girl. Hjalmar lives in Minnesota with his wife and three children, twin boys and a girl. Harold and Algot are working at neighboring farms near Glenfield. Carl owns a butcher shop in Leal, North Dakota. Virgil and Axel are at home with Deloris, aged ten. They stay with Oscar and his wife. Freda, the oldest girl, has taken a course in Beauty Culture but is home at present. Of the five girls from Mr. Erickson's first wife, three are living. The two youngest, Emma and Ruth died several years ago. Selma is working in Valley City and Elvira is on a farm west of Cooperstown. Mrs. A. O. Peterson is the only one of this vicinity. She has four girls.

In all Mr. and Mrs. Erickson have surviving them, ten children, three step-daughters of Mrs. Erickson, and ten grand children.