
MANFRED HISTORY AND PRESERVATION

P.O. Box 321 Harvey, North Dakota 58341

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Greetings from Manfred!

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First Settled in Eddy County

Most of my pioneering was done back in the southeast corner of Eddy County. I filed on land there in 1885, put in six or seven years there, had a very hard struggle to make both ends meet. We had 30 miles to the nearest market, so if we were lucky enough to raise a crop, the expenses of threshing and marketing took nearly all the profits and there was nothing left. The settlement had half a dozen families, all equally poor.

Here we practiced true socialism, by helping one another living as frugally as possible, we managed to pull through. God knows, we could not enjoy any luxuries or abundance of life as poor people nowadays clamor for. What I intend to tell you people is about our coming to Wells County.

Start of New Life

With the coming of the Soo Line Railroad through North Dakota, opening of new lands in the northwestern part of the state, land for settlers close to the railroad became available. In the spring of 1892, T. K. Rogne, Nels Hovey and I struck out looking for a more convenient place to start a new life.

Having been hampered with long distances to market, we agreed not to go more than three miles from the railroad survey. We started to prospect where the survey crossed the James River near Kensal. We took notes of different quarter sections as we went along. After we got out in the center of Wells County, the settlers were very few and far apart.

Where Fessenden now stands, there was not a house. Bob Roberts was putting up a building there near the fairgrounds. A mile or two to the northwest, Al Bean had a claim shanty and there I put in my first night in Wells County. We continued on our land hunting trip to the western border of the county.

The last settler was on the eastern bank of the Sheyenne River. West of the river, a fire had just swept the prairie so the land was black as far as we could see. The land looked like a dessert. We went as far as five miles out from where Harvey is now located. We had to turn back as there was no feed for our horses.

The next night we were quartered in William Montgomery's granary. Montgomery and Shaw had settled there three or four years before and a post office was established here called Whitby. Mail was brought from Sykeston once a week. At this time it was known that a station would be built at Fessenden and we figured another would be put up there as there were 16 miles between those two points. There necessarily would be another half way between.

A Decision was Made

After looking over our field notes of the different descriptions taken down, T. K. Rogne and I agreed to file on Section 20 and 29, taking some of each section. This location is just half way between Fessenden and Harvey so we figured we could not miss getting close to a town. Going back we stopped at Sykeston and made application for filing with Webster Sanford, Clerk of Court at that time. I was the first Norwegian settler in Manfred Township.

Building of a Shanty

In July that same year, T.K. Rogne, L. O. Burkum, and I came back and brought a load of lumber with us and

put up a shanty 12 feet by 16 feet. We also put up about 25 tons of hay. I remember the mosquitoes were quite bad at night. After completing our haying we went home again.

Late in the fall I came back out here again. This time I had C. O. Roble along with me. He filed on Section 20, on his land that part of the village of Manfred is located on. At this time the railroad graders were at work and the grade was nearly finished.

Embarkment

The next spring I loaded my worldly possessions in a wagon drawn by three oxen and two cows led behind and started out for what I expected to be the promised land. The first day I was overtaken by a snowstorm, so I had to stay with a farmer about 10 miles east of New Rockford.

The next day I managed to get into New Rockford. Bright and early next morning I left New Rockford. Every low place was filled with water, so I had quite a time in coming through. Crossed the James River at John Gosses place on a bridge. Coming three or four miles west I met a farmer who informed me that it would be impossible to cross the river at the next crossing as there was no bridge.

Stopped that night out on the prairies. The next morning I went back and re-crossed the bridge at Fosses and followed the south side of the river. This was Sunday and a very beautiful day with bright sunshine.

April 21, 1893

About three miles east of the claim I was overtaken by my brother-in-law, my wife, and my three husky boys ranging in age from three to six years. They drove a horse and buggy. Coming out to the claim we found the shanty we expected to stop in was plumb full of snow, but as we had a small tent, we were not so bad off after all. The next days we cleared the snow out, moved the shack on a dry spot and before night we were domiciled in our new home. This was April 21, 1893.

Manfred Township

Here in what is Manfred township were four settlers - Charles Bartz, Frank Kolosky, Jesse Fincher, and William Goedecke. These families were here for about three and one-half years or so before our appearance.

Two or three weeks after our arrival T.K. Rogne and family came out and built their shanty about 30 rods from ours. From now on things commenced to move very fast.

In the last part of May, the rails were laid, and trains commenced to run. New settlers came in thick and fast and all land subject to homestead was gobbled up in short order.

Manfred Thrives

The town site of Manfred was laid out on Section 28, water tank put up, Section house built, and O & M Elevator built with R. C. Jacobson, Agent, Rogne and Burkum erected and started a general store, a lumber yard opened up, blacksmith shop - everything was humming.

The old settlement here was called the James River Settlement or the James River Crossing. There was a road or trail crossing the James River just below the present Manfred Dam.

The settlers had already organized a school district and named it St. Anna and built a school house in St. Anna Township. Both Rogne and I had children of school age. We had to be looking for better school facilities for our children as the road to the old school would be in the neighborhood of four miles.

Manfred School District

The school district was composed of two townships. After some wrangling, an agreement was made to divide and for us to organize a new school district naming it Manfred. The old St. Anna school house was moved up to a place on quarter mile west of Manfred on the south side of the railroad and St. Anna built a new school house about one and one-half miles farther south. Our first teacher was Miss Sadie Hutchinson and the next was T. H.

O'Neal.

Business Increases

Our nearest post office was Whitby, about seven miles distant, but in 1884 the Manfred Post Office was established with T. K. Rogne as Postmaster.

Another store was started by Benson and Willborg. Two more grain elevators were built and put in operation. In 1905, the Manfred Farmers Elevator Co. was organized with T. O. Roble as president and P. B. Anderson as secretary and manager. Before the building of the Sykeston-Turtle Lake branch of the Northern Pacific and the Surrey cutoff by the Great Northern, Manfred was a lively trading center. More than 600,000 bushels of grain was marketed yearly through the four grain elevators only. Through the Farmers Elevator, of which I have records, in good crop years were marketed 225,000 bushels a year.

The Norwegians organized and built a church in 1905. Manfred has outlived two school houses and is already casting about for another. Manfred at its height of prosperity boasted of three or four general stores, two hardware stores, two blacksmith shops, two lumberyards, two barber shops, two pool rooms; they had a bank, drugstore, livery barn, feed mill, doctor, and a butcher shop. Taken all in all, a real lively place.

The advent of automobiles and good roads brought ruin to the small towns. Every Tom, Dick and Harry had to have an automobile and had to have somewhere to go, had to go to a bigger town. Everybody had to have an automobile regardless of whether they could afford it or not. I think herein lies one of the main causes that so many are now clamoring hardship.

Source: Excerpt from Growing with Pride History Book, P.B. Anderson

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