



P.C.H.S

Volume 2007

Pennington County Historical Society

Number 1

John Jaranson

(This article is the beginning of a series based upon interviews conducted with John Jaranson. It covers John's youth in Thief River Falls.)

I was born on July 14, 1917 at my parent's home at 520 Riverside Avenue. My mother's maiden name was Alma Josephine Johnson and my dad's name was John Gustaf Jaranson. Our name was originally "Olson" as my grandfather's name was Jarand Olson. That's how we got to be "Jaranson" and our family is three-quarters Norwegian and one-quarter Swedish. You could say that the Swedish part is really Danish as Sweden was once a part of Denmark. I believe that the part of Sweden that our family came from was called "Skona" or something that sounded like that. My paternal grandparents immigrated here and my father was born in Lyle, Minnesota. My mother's parents also immigrated to here. My maternal grandmother was born in Christiania, Norway, which is now Oslo. Her husband was born in Sweden someplace and I am not certain exactly where that was in Sweden.

My parents had two children, my brother and myself. My brother's name was Albert George, but we called him "Ab" because I couldn't say "Albert" when I was little. Ab was born on December 8th of 1918 so I was sixteen months older. We grew up on Riverside Avenue and went to Washington – the old Washington – grade school. I attended Central over on Fourth Street for seventh and eighth grade and graduated from Lincoln High School in 1935. We didn't have a hockey team then, but we played hockey. I also played baseball and softball and continued to play on City teams for quite a number of years. The last year that I was in high school, there was a school baseball team and I played second baseman on that team.

I also hunted and went fishing. When I was twelve years old, I got my first gun. It was a single-shot, bolt-action, Hamilton 22 rifle. Then I bought a little 4-10 Hercules shotgun from Montgomery Ward. I learned to shoot sharptail with that. My dad taught me. He was a real good shot - Real Good! We hunted in every direction from Thief River, west on the Pembina Trail, up towards Middle River, and over towards Grygla, Fourtown, Goodrich, Mavie, and Erie country. The country was full of sharptail in the dry years. There were some prairie chickens – yellowlegs – but they disappeared. I used to walk from Riverside Avenue to the Barzen farm where Barzen Avenue is now. There used to be fields out there. There were brush thickets here and there, and there used to be yellowlegs in them. I shot them there a number of times. They used to have seasons on them and they quit because we didn't have enough of them. They were easier to shoot. They were heavier, and they were in more open country. Sharptails would go hide in the brush, in the hazel-nut brush, popple groves, and swamps. But prairie chickens were more along the fence lines and stubble fields. We shot some ruffed grouse, but there didn't seem to be many around. I know there were years when we never shot any. They were mostly in that Grygla country. We didn't have many ruffed grouse around here. The pheasants came in the early-thirties. For a number of years, we had quite a few pheasants here. They were spread out all over when we didn't have a winter where there was heavy snow and then there were the Hungarians. We used to have Hungarians here all the time.

After I graduated from high school, I set pins at the bowling alley the first winter. The bowling alley

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was in the basement of the Elk's building where The Club used to be below the Ekeren Drug Store. I set pins that winter until June of 1937. I set forty or fifty lines on most days, but one day I set one hundred three lines. I was paid two and one-half cents a line. It was not much money, but it was a job and there were not many jobs available at that time.

One day, a fellow came down to the bowling alley and told me that they were putting two people on at Hartz. Hartz was in the Thief River Co-Operative Creamery building at that time. The building was over on Atlantic Avenue (204) where Northwest Power Systems is now. Another fellow and I went down and applied for the jobs and we were hired. Hartz had the entire upstairs, half of the center area, and the full basement. L. B. Hartz rented the coolers from the creamery that had the rest of the building and also had the Locker Plant. Tom Fuller, Al Weber, and Red Bergland were in the Creamery. At first, I worked in the coolers, picking over apples. The Hartz Company was the only supplier in the area that had apples. They came in forty-pound lugs and some of them were old and soft. I picked out the soft ones and wiped off the good ones. Apples commanded quite a price, especially at fair time. I also picked up freight. We'd go to the Soo Line freight office and then to the Great Northern to pick up what came in on the two railroad lines. Herb Haraldson drove the truck and he became a truck driver for Hartz and I worked in the warehouse.

One day, my boss, Clarence Gulseth – his nickname was "Goose" – asked me if I wanted to try out to be a billing clerk. He knew that I had graduated from high school and must have thought that I knew more than it took to sort apples. A billing clerk had to memorize all the weights and retail prices. My best subject in high school was mathematics. I had Blanche Korstad and really learned mathematics from her. A clerk also prepared the books for the drivers who made the deliveries to the retail stores. In February of 1938, the company moved to the new Hartz warehouse built next to the Great Northern tracks on the east side of Arnold Avenue. There were five or six loading docks along the south side where the Great Northern tracks ran next to the building. The Great Northern brought in carloads of produce and fruit to the warehouse from where it was trucked to the stores scattered around this part of the state. I

worked in the billing office until I moved to the credit department where I worked until I retired. When I went to work at Hartz, I was paid thirty-five dollars a month for about seventy-five to eighty hours a week. That made \$420 a year. I tried to save most of it. I retired from Hartz in 1982. I had worked there for roughly forty-five years with four years off while I was in the service.

I had a high number for the draft and knew that I was not going to be called up right away when the war began. Because I knew that, four of us, Howard Hoium, Clarence Offerdahl, Harold Winjum, and I, took a trip in February of 1941. We took a month off and went down to Mexico City and California. Clarence had a new '40 Chevrolet. He was a manager at Hartz Store. You could buy a new Chevrolet for seven or eight hundred dollars then. Clarence wasn't married or anything, so he could afford to buy a new car. Hoium and Offerdahl were pals from high school and Harold Winjum and I were the youngest of the bunch so we partnered up that way.

First, we went to the University of Minnesota and watched one of the Mickelson boys who played on the Ohio State basketball team. We saw the basketball game and stayed there for a few days. Then we started out to visit New Orleans. On the way, there were all of these approaches to these bridges – crossing over rivers. We ended up going through this swamp – ugly country - really ugly. All of a sudden, across the road in front of us, came an old lady pig with a string of little pigs behind her. We were going pretty fast. We had just passed a highway patrol trooper and we were going faster than he was, but he didn't do anything. We'd probably exceeded the speed limits five or ten miles for all I know. Anyhow, we couldn't miss them – the pigs - because they were strung out across the road. We hit one of them. Of course, we stopped the car – the rest of the pigs scattered and one piglet was laying there kind of kicking. So Hoium got out and picked it up. The trooper came up behind us while we were taking a picture of Hoium holding the pig. The trooper said, "When you get through with him, throw him in the ditch." That's all he did! He must have been used to seeing something like that!

When we got into New Orleans, we went to the French Quarter and all those night clubs. It was kind of odd for us to see that. We went to a restaurant

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Remembering

The Endowment Fund was established to secure the future of the Peder Engelstad Pioneer Village. Only the interest from this fund can be spent. The current balance in this account is \$8,500. Please consider the Historical Society in your memorials, charitable giving, and estate planning. The Society is a non-profit institution, so all donations are tax-deductible.

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 Olga Nelson
 Donna Poole
 Brian Mostue

Personally Speaking

This summer will bring a new director to the Peder Engelstad Pioneer Village. Jill Johnson has been hired for the 2007 year and I am hopeful that this will be the beginning of a new era for the Village. As I look back upon the past ten years, I am pleased with the progress that has been made but know that it will not matter, if the progress made is not continued. Many of our members know that the Pennington County Historical Society was incorporated in 1938. The original document in our files was signed by W.W. Prichard, Henry C. Eckland, Agnes Israelson, Paul Lundgren, Lincoln Arnold, Mary V. Shaw, and Mrs. J.M. Bishop. Over the years, the organization struggled to find a home and was at one time located in the basement of the auditorium.



On July 27th of 1976, the City of Thief River Falls deeded the site of the City's sewer disposal plant that is now the Peder Engelstad Village to the Pennington County Historical Society. Under the leadership of Inga Geving, the buildings that comprised the original Pioneer Village were moved from about the county to the five acre site. Many early volunteers worked many hours to move the buildings and renovate each of them after moving.

In 1993, Inga Geving asked Ralph Engelstad to put a roof on the slurry pit that was on the grounds. There were many pieces of farm machinery rusting in the pit which had water on its exposed floor. Ralph built, instead, the Engelstad building to house the rusting machinery in the pit. In consideration of the magnitude of the donation, the Historical Society Board of Trustees renamed the village in honor of Ralph's grandfather who was a prominent pioneer farmer in Pennington County.

At the current time, the Historical Society is in a fairly solvent financial situation with the support of the loyal members, generous donors, and the County and City. Each person from the past history did the very best that they could to preserve and share the history of this county and we would not be where we are today without each person's contribution and dedication to that cause.

With the new technology available, more and more people are discovering that Pennington County is ahead of the game in preserving history. The technology has happened because of Andrew Filer and he continues to move the organization into the future. Using the advancing technology to share our history will hopefully make preserving our county's history relevant to the coming generations.

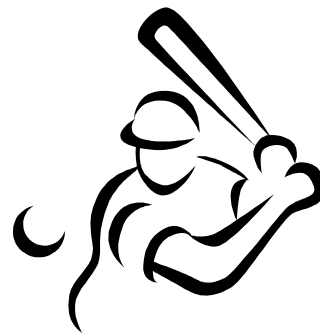
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and decided we were going to eat some local food. I ordered six raw oysters. I didn't even know what they were! They came on the shell. I started eating some of them. They didn't taste like anything. But then on the edge of the shell, there was a little white worm, standing on its hind legs. I looked at it, and I said, "Jeez! Look at that!" A guy, who was a native of New Orleans - in the next booth - there were separations between the booths that you could practically see over - stood up and said, "Oh! Put some of that hot sauce on him. It'll kill 'em every time!"

Harold Winjum had an uncle and aunt living in Dallas and we visited them. We stopped to ask directions as we traveled. Finally, we hired a guide. That worked out real well. We paid him so much a day. Then we went down to Laredo - crossed the border at Laredo - and went down to Monterrey and Tamaulipas, then Mexico City and Acapulco, and all those places down there. I took two hundred dollars cash along. I had ten dollars left when we came back. We all paid our own share. We shared on gas. We assigned one guy every day or every-other-day to handle the money. We'd each give him so much - ten or fifteen dollars - to pay for everything. It worked out well that way. We never had any arguments or anything. We got along real well. Sometimes we stayed with friends and we also stayed at a place called the Shirley Hotel down in Mexico City. It was American run, and the water wasn't contaminated. The staff spoke English, but we hired a professional guide named Carlos Almedo and he took us all over. I think that we paid him five dollars a day, American money. We spent a week down there. We went up on the pyramids at Mexico City - two big pyramids - great big ones - the steps were really high, we climbed up close to four or five hundred feet. And up at the top was an Indian girl selling these arrowheads. One pyramid was for the moon, and one was for the sun. They were huge. Carlos took us to these gardens. I can't remember that name. He took us to Taxco, where they had the silver mines. Someplace, there was a church where everything inside was covered in gold. That's where we bought our case of tequila - twelve cents a quart - twelve quarts. We carried it with us! We never even opened the darn case until we got to California. In fact, when crossing the border into Arizona, we had to go through a Customs Office stop. They were checking to see if we were bringing foreign fruit or anything like that in from Mexico. The other guys knew about this, but I was

innocent-like. I didn't understand what was going on. So, I was standing by the car and this Customs man came up to me and said, "Do you have anything to declare?" I said, "No!" And he asked, "What's this?" We had a box with some coconuts and some stuff. I said, "Souvenirs from Mexico! Some scarves - we went to the bullfights." That's what I thought he was talking about. But he was talking about the case of tequila! He took my explanation of what was in there, so we got by with it. When we got away from the border, the guys said, "You sure had a lot of guts telling him that!" If they had known what it was, they would have confiscated it.

We opened a couple of bottles in California and we finally had eight bottles left because we each got two bottles when we got home. I've still got a bottle of it. The bottles had corks. I was saving the two that I had for some special occasion. We used one at a bonfire one time. I still have the other one it at home - there's nothing in it! It ate through the cork and evaporated! It was in the bottom of a fishing tackle box, but it is all gone. In California, we went down to Joe DiMaggio's and ate hamburgers for a dollar-and-a-half each when they were fifteen cents in Thief River. We went up on Twin Peaks, across the Golden Gate Bridge, and to Oakland. Preach Lundell used to live here in Thief River. As I recall, he was a minister here in Thief River. He lived in Oakland and Bob Bell from Roseau lived in Oakland at that time also. Bell was playing hockey in Oakland. He later owned the Bell Cabins on west sixth street in Thief River. We stayed with Lundell. Other than that, we came back through Truckee, Reno and across South Dakota, back to Minnesota and Thief River Falls.



Snips

Pitch-In Day Saturday, May 19, 2007


Anyone willing to assist in cleaning up the Peder Engelstad Pioneer Village for the season is invited to come to the Village anytime from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 19th. Supplies will be provided for cleaning buildings and grounds. Lunch will be served at noon in the basement of the Asphalt Church in the Village. Anyone willing to help is asked to call 681-5767 and leave a message indicating the number of people coming. Volunteers are asked to wear old clothing and to bring any cleaning supplies and equipment that they prefer.



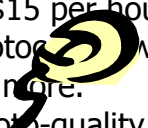
Membership

A membership renewal envelope is included in this newsletter. Your mailing label gives the last date of your membership. Renew your membership, increase your contribution, and invite a friend to join the Society. Please encourage the businesses that you frequent in Thief River Falls to support the Historical Society with a business membership. The Historical Society publishes this newsletter, does research for individuals, and researches the history of the county and its cities throughout every month of the year. It also owns and maintains the Peder Engelstad Pioneer Village. Funds are always needed to keep up the Village and pay for utilities, even when the Village is not open.

Family Festival Saturday, June 30, 2007

Each year the Historical Society honors pioneer families. Very simply, the criteria are that the family has lived in the county for many years and members still reside here. The Clarence & Emma Peterson family of Silverton Township and the Ole L. & Anna Ihle family of Thief River Falls have been chosen as honored families for 2007. The families will be honored at a program on Saturday afternoon on June 30th. Please watch the local news media for details of the celebration. 

Charges for Archival Research

Over the past few years the amount of time spent by the Village staff in pursuit of requested information has increased exponentially. The Society Board of Directors has approved the following procedures and fees for research in archival and computer files. Research will be done by Caryl J. Bugge upon appointment. Once a task has been defined, the cost of the research will be \$15 per hour, payable to the Society. Five photographs will be included in any fee of \$15 or more.  Photographic inkjet prints on photo-quality paper will be provided upon request for \$2 per print. Society members will receive a 10% discount on all fees.



The Website – Grade-School Names ??

The Pennington County Historical Society website (www.pvillage.org) currently is receiving 139 visitors a day. In the past 629 days there have been over a seven hundred thousand "hits" to the site by twenty-nine thousand visitors. The photos donated to the Historical Society by the closed grade schools have now been scanned. There are photos that are missing and the names of all but the last few years of students are also missing. When viewing the photos from Northrop, Knox, and Washington, please help the Historical Society by noting the number of the photograph and forwarding any names that you can provide.

A Couple of Guys - John Bornholdt and Fred Dallman

A few years ago, a saw mill was brought to the Village by David Strong and Dan Helle with the help of other friends. Max Campbell of Oslo, Minnesota, had purchased two mills. The larger was donated to the Polk County Historical Society. It is up and operating in East Grand Forks during Heritage Days. Mr. Campbell donated the smaller mill to the Pennington County Historical Society. The saw mill was originally located near Trail and was manufactured by a Minneapolis company. Last summer, John and Fred moved the principal framework for the saw mill into the south end of the slurry pit. It is their intention to have the mill operating for special occasions at the Village in the near future.



Using the Village

Because Pennington County and Thief River Falls contribute to the maintenance of the Village, it should and has been used for many functions that do not bring admission fees to the Village. Each year in recent years, the kindergarten students from Viking have visited the Village before it was open to the public for the season. Their visit has become the harbinger of the coming season each year. Last summer, a summer school class made two visits to the Village for which the school district made a contribution. Each of the past Septembers have brought all of the fifth-graders from Franklin Middle School to the Village after the season has ended. This educational usage of the Village has also brought many guests back to the Village in that many children have come back with their parents and grandparents to learn more about the collections from the past that are housed in the buildings.

Other groups that visited last year were from the Convalescent Nursing Care Center, Valley Home, Sons of Norway, Women of Today, 4-H Club, and Community Bay Services. The Thief River Falls Park & Recreation Department has held "Pioneer Days" each summer at the Village during July.

The Village has been open without admission fee to all Lincoln High School Reunion groups every summer. A number of couples have been married in the Village Asphult Church each summer and these couples make a donation for the use of the Church. In 2006, Digi-Key used the Village grounds for an event and made a very generous donation to the Historical Society.



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