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Year 1883: One mans adventure along the Lake County Scenic Byway

The History of Green Valley by F. M. Shepard

The author of the history of Green Valley reached Detroit one cold day in November, 1883, stayed over night and the next morning, bright and early, in company with Geo. Harrington, started for Osage with a pack sack weighing fifty pounds, a forty-five-ninety Winchester rifle, five hundred cartridges, a compass, a knife and everything that makes a complete hunter's outfit, my intention being to kill a car load of deer, ship them to St. Paul and return to my native home in Michigan. We arrived in Osage about 9:30 p.m., somewhat the worse for wear, as I had sprained my ankle trying to escape some of the many stumps along the crooked trail from Height of Land to Shell Lake. After eating supper I lay down on my weary cot and closed my eyes, only to see deer jumping over and around me, some even had wings and were sailing through the air. And I with my forty-five-ninety blazing away until my five hundred cartridges were nearly exhausted. at last I awoke, jumping out of bed, only to find I could stand on but one foot, my ankle being swollen so that it was impossible for me to get on my shoe. However, after eating breakfast I made a trip out into the country by the aid of an ox team, to Fred Harrington's, having met him, together with his brother George, M. S. Leavitt, Hugh Alexander and Jacob Baumgardner in the Dakota harvest fields.

After a few days of careful nursing and hot applications of worm-wood and vinegar I was able to

take my rifle and start out on my long anticipated hunt.

After hunting six days and seeing several dozen deer, shooting at them all (and I think until this day I wounded one). While I didn't find any blood, it ran like a deer that had been hit somewhere. Meeting with this success as a hunter and not having money enough to return home, I naturally turned my mind in another direction. About this time the first threshing machine was hauled into Osage and I was employed as one of the crew. We moved onto a thirty acre field of wheat, this being one of the largest fields west of Osage. We threshed from the thirty acres nine hundred bushels of No. 1 wheat. This turned my mind in still another direction and I commenced to investi-gate the soil, as before this I had a very poor opinion of the country as far as the productive qualities of the soil was concerned. I dug up some of the soil and thawed it out, yet I was not satisfied, but thought that there must be something that I could not see in it, as it looked very sandy to me. But by this time, being determined to have a home and share my lot with the rest of the poor yet warm-hearted people whom I found here, by the aid of M. S. Leavitt, who told me of the northwest quarter of Sec 12, Twp 139, Rge 36 (now in the town of Green Valley) being vacant, I cruised it over and being satisfied it was all right I turned my footsteps toward

Detroit (the county seat), arriving there in time for supper, making the trip from Osage to Detroit on foot over the rough and crooked trail in fourteen hours, and filed on the above named quarter. This brings me to my settling in Green Valley.

I found settled there at that time: J.J. Breuer on NW quarter of Sec 4; Chas. Alexander on NE quarter of Sec 4; Hugh Alexander on SE quarter of Sec 4; Joe Palmer on SW quarter of Sec 4; Lee Cole on NW quarter of Sec 2; Lou Cole on SWquarter of Sec 2; D. Adams on NE quarter of Sec 2; M.S. Leavitt on NE quarter of Sec 14; R.A. Hopkins on SE quarter of Sec 14; Sam Cole on NE quarter of Sec 10; C.R. Burch on SE quarter of Sec 10. There were also a few families of Finlanders in the southern part of town. Mr. J.J. Breuer, who was born in Germany in 1849, was the first settler in Green Valley, locating there June 15, 1882. The first Green valley people to get married were Joseph J. Breuer and Angeline Kinney, who were married on the 9th of November, 1882, to whom three children were born.

A little later Mr. and Mrs. Sam Cole arrived. Miss Blanche Leavitt was the first girl born in Green Valley. She graduated in the class of 1902 from the Park Rapids High School and afterwards graduated from the St. Cloud State Normal. She is now teaching her third year in the Park Rapids High School. Edward Cole was the first boy born in the township and he now resides in the state of Washington.

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The first death on record was that of Mary Hellamer, daughter of Henry and Katarena Mattila, who died on the 17th day of September, 1886. Mr. Turman Thompson, father of Mrs. Sam Cole, was the first adult person to die in Green Valley. He was born in Wisconsin. He was a blacksmith and shoemaker by trade, had homesteaded near Red Wing and when the Indians broke out he and his family returned to Wisconsin. In 1885 he settled in Green Valley and died there May 31, 1888, at the age of 61.

The first school house was built of logs, on the southeast corner of Sec 3, without any expense to the district, in fact it was built before the district was organized, the material and labor all being donated by the settlers. Miss Flora McKinley of Osage, daughter of S.S. McKinley was the first teacher. She taught two terms in succession. She was followed by Miss Eugenia Price of Osage, who also taught two terms. I might say right here, she is still teaching the author of this article and three children, as we were married on the 15th of September, 1897. As I am writing my mind runs back to many very pleasant as well as some unpleasant and peculiar experiences while holding down my claim. One was shortly after moving into my cabin. it was on a dark, foggy morning that I took my gun and started for a lake about three-quarters of a mile distant, thinking I might get a wild goose for dinner, as I had heard some there the day before. After traveling about what I supposed to be the required distance, I saw an opening in the brush which I took to be the lake, but when coming out to the opening I was somewhat surprised to find a clearing of a few acres and a log cabin. Thinking I had found a new settler whom I had not heard of, I walked boldly up to the door, set my gun down and was about to rap, when I spied a familiar looking lock and further observations brought me to me senses, and I found myself standing at my own cabin door. I never started

out after that without the sun or a compass to guide me. I might also relate my experience with a lynx. One evening when coming home from Osage with a sack of flour and a week's provisions on my back, when within half a mile of my cabin, I heard an unmerciful yell which made the woods ring. It also made my hat raise so I could scarcely keep it on my head. I quickened my footsteps as much as possible under the circumstances, which was not very slow, until I reached my own door, which was never more welcome. I laid down my burden and Mr. Howard, an old gentleman that stayed with me, asked what was the matter. When I related to him the circumstance, we listened and we both thought we heard something outside the door. By this time my heart had got down out of my throat and had commenced its normal beating. I took down my Winchester and stepped outside, when not ten feet from me I could see two balls of fire and hear a hissing noise. I drew up my gun and fired. I then went back into the house took a light and went out to find I had made a very lucky shot, as there lay the monster dead. It was one of the largest lynx I have ever seen. These animals were very numerous at that time. There were also some wolves, and bear and deer were very plentiful.

This township when fully developed will be one of the leading townships of the county, as it is particularly adapted to stock-raising. The firm of Vanderpoel and Shepard have a farm of five hundred and twenty acres on Section 11 that they are stocking with cattle and sheep. Many other fine farms are to be found there.

The author of this article was born in Bainbridge, near Benton Harbor, Michigan, July 16, 1860. He came to Minnesota in 1883, and resided in Green Valley until 1894, when he moved to Park Rapids and went into the real estate, loan and insurance business with F. A. Vanderpoel, under the firm name of Vanderpoel & Shepard. He was elected judge of probate of Hubbard County in 1900, which office he has

held ever since and was reelected in November, 1906.

The township was organized on the 3rd of May, 1886, at a township election held at the house of Samuel Cole. The name of the town at first was Hope, but afterwards changed to Green Valley. The first set of township officers were: Chairman of board of supervisors, Frank M. Shepard; supervisors, Henry Mattila, John Johnson; township clerk, Joseph J. Breuer; treasurer, C. R. Burch; assessor, Peter Vosen; justices of the peace, Joseph J. Breuer and John Mansikka; constables, Samuel Cole and August Jacobson.

When the petition was first filed with the county auditor it included all of what is now Green Valley and Runeberg townships. Runeberg was then fairly well settled, but there was not an acre of taxable land in the township, while what is now Wolf Lake Township contained several large tracts of taxable land, chiefly pine. Mr. Wilcox, the county auditor, advised them to change what is now Runeberg for what is now Wolf Lake Township, which had many acres of land which could be taxed and did not have a person living within its borders. The petition was taken back and the change made accordingly. The township as first organized included what is now Green Valley and Wolf Lake.

Frank M. Shepard. A Pioneer History of Becker County Minnesota.

Website: www.rootsweb.com/~mnbecker/ch48.htm