

## PREFACE

Since there are but two of us left of these who came to Newfolden in the summer of 1904, there is a compulsion within to tell the story of the village of Newfolden - - its beginnings, its boom, its progress, its people. A backward glance at the beginning of Newfolden in 1904 reveals a world that did not have the conveniences nor the luxuries of today but the people had desires, ambitions, and hopes that characterize noble men and women of all times. The pioneers of Newfolden strove to improve living conditions, to promote the spiritual welfare of their families, and combat evil in all its forms. Somehow these pioneers sensed what Edmund Burke meant when he said,

"All that is necessary for forces of evil to triumph is for enough good people to do nothing."

The past seven decades have a treasure house of precious memories of the people who have crossed our paths. All of them have made an impact on the total life of the community. From a multitude of general data it has been necessary to record only a portion. In addition to the facts there may be an occasional revelation of the feelings and the emotions of men, women, and children. It has not been easy to verify factual material and statistics but we are grateful for all who lent a hand. Every effort has been to be accurate. If errors are found, as there surely must be, we ask your kind understanding. We have done the best we could. But as you note errors and omissions you see your opportunity to take up the torch and tell the continuing story of the village of

Newfolden.

We appeal to the grandparents to tell their experiences to the younger generation for your experiences are a part of the wholeness of life which includes the past as well as the present. This is not a complete history but rather an enumeration of episodes, incidents, and recollections we have, especially of the early years of Newfolden.

May the glimpses we have given contribute to your enjoyment of the goodly heritage.

Martha Kleppe  
Elizabeth Kleppe Haugen

Dated at Newfolden, Minnesota  
January first 1974

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## MERCHANTS COME AND GO

Let us take a look at the preparations that preceded the coming of the first merchants to the village of Newfolden. During the early summer of 1904 the Soo Line staked out the route of the proposed railroad line from Thief River Falls northward. The children along the route were fascinated by the first evidences, colored pieces of cloth tied on trees along the route. As the summer progressed surveyors came followed by hordes of workers who cleared the brush, graded the road bed, built bridges, and drained swampy places. With what seemed like amazing speed, at that time, the gleaming rails were laid. The present generation can hardly comprehend how manual labor and horses could do the work that is now done by bull-dozers, and heavy earth moving machines. Business men from Thief River Falls rode the gravel trains to see the sights and watch the progress. The Soo Line in 1904 located the site of the village that is now Newfolden in the ox-bow loop of the Middle River eight blocks on the north-east corner section of the south east quarter of section 5 surveyed by J. R. Wood. In October of the same yr. Halberg's addition was surveyed by J. R. Mack on the northwest corner of section 9. In 1906 blocks 9-14 and August 24 and November 23, 1907 the Skaaras addition just south of original site was surveyed.

In August 1904 The Thief River Falls Times printed the following:

"The new town on the proposed line of the Soo Line which was to have been named Baltic has been changed to Newfolden taking the name of the post office near where the village is to be located and to which that post office will be moved. D. B. Bakke of this city and formerly a resident of Newfolden township will be the agent for the sale of lots in the new village. The new townsite will be desirable for it is surrounded by good farming country."

Prospective merchants kept their eyes on the rail building and when lots were opened for sale Ole Kleppe was on hand to buy. He selected what to him seemed the highest spot on the platted side, on the corner of Minnesota Ave. and Main St. where the Bjorgaard Store is now located. On that lot Mr. Kleppe built the first structure in the new village. It was a small building at the rear of the lot to serve as a barn for a while and later as a warehouse. The Kleppe family camped in this structure a couple of months while lumber was hauled from Argyle for the store building erected at the front of the lot. The carpenters were Reinert Nelson, John Carlson and his sons Oscar and Willie. This building was shorter than the present Bjorgaard Store and only half as wide but it had two full stories. For one year the family lived in two rooms at the rear of the store and two rooms on the second floor. The remainder of the second floor was used as an assembly hall. After a year the entire second floor was made into living quarters with an outside stairway on the north side of the building.

Simultaneously with the building of the Kleppe Store Hoberg and Erickson build a larger store kitty corner from the Kleppes. The Hoberg Store had one story with a balcony where the office and the post were located. The contractor for the Hoberg and Erickson Store was Mr. Kringlen.

The problems of construction the first year were many. Lumber had to be hauled by horses and wagon from Argyle or Thief River Falls. There had to be food and shelter for the workmen as well as for sight seeing visitors. People implored Mrs. Kleppeto serve meals and lunches until the Foss Restaurant a building would be ready for business. With resourcefulness and energy she complied. She found farmers willing to sell butter,

eggs, milk, and meat. Of course, Mrs. Kleppe had to make the bread and pastry.

Once Mrs. Holden sold a newly baked batch of bread to her. On the average 20-50 people, railroad workers, carpenters, and transients were served daily.

Within fourteen months at least sixteen structures had been build in the village. In this section information will be given about the general merchandise, hardware, and grocery stores and the owners thereof. Other business will be dealt with in another section.

### OLE KLEPPE STORE

Ole Kleppe continued in business for more than a decade. He expanded the grocery stock and added shoes, dry goods, and clothing. During the first years coffee and sugar were sold in bulk. The coffee came in whole kernels and usually the merchants ground these to suit the customer, but sometimes the buyer would choose to grind the coffee beans at home. The open cracker barrel was a common sight. Butter was sold by the farmers who brought the butter in earthenware jars. The butter was weighed and dumped into wooden tubs which were first soaked in water. The filled tubs were shipped to produce companies by freight. According to available records, butter on October 11, 1912 sold for 20 cents a pound. On September 1, 1905 two cases of eggs (60 dozen) were sold to Haas Brothers for eight dollars and ten cents. Vinegar and kerosene were tapped from barrels for the customers. On March 2, 1912 a 98 pound bag of flour sold for \$2.75. Clerks employed at some time or other at the Kleppe Store included Rasmus Kleppe, Julia Hanson, Inga Haarstad. On March 2, 1906 Inga received the sum of six dollars for clerking three weeks. In addition she received board and room at the Kleepes. In 1916 Mr. Kleppe sold his business to Anderson Brothers and Mr. Kleppe was

appointed postmaster of Newfolden, a post which he had held till his accidental death in 1928. He was struck by a hit-run driver a block from his home.

After a brief time the Andersons sold to Arvid and Tony Carlson who at the time owned chain stores in Marshall County. Mr. and Mrs. Carlson resided on the second floor of the store as had the Kleppes before them. Two of the clerks who worked for Carlson were Ole Johnson and Olger Green. The latter began his work there in 1919. The following year Conrad Bjornrud joined the force. In 1922 the Carlsons moved to Middle River and Olger Green became a partner in the business. H. C. Haugen was for a few years in the 1920's a partner with Olger Green.

### Newfolden Mercantile Company

In the later twenties the warehouse at the rear of the lot burned. It was replaced with a larger structure and other improvements were made in the store. In the thirties a full length addition was made to the north side. Clerks known to have worked at the Mercantile Store include , Vandella Pilgren, Mrs. Conrad Bjornrud Mrs. Olger Green, Mrs. Gordon Elseth, Mrs. Kore Myhrer, and Lydia Loveid.

In 1945 Conrad Bjornrud bought half interest in the store. Remodeling and improvements were made from time to time. The second story of the original building was removed in 1962 and an addition was made to the rear of the store. A hardware line was added and in season wool was bought and sold. In 1952 Gordon Elseth bought Olger Green's share of the business at which time Olger Green moved to Thief River Falls to be a funeral director.