History of Badger Township
P. R. Crothers, 1925

Badger Township is located in the northeast corner of Kingsbury County, in eastern South Dakota, and is comprised of all Congressional Township number 1122 north, Range 53, west of the fifth Principal Meridian and the east half of Township 112, Range 54, sections one, two, and three, of Township 111, Range 53, and contains an area of 60 square miles. Lake Albert, Lake Badger, and Lake Thisted lie wholly within the Township, and the northeast corner borders on the west shore of Lake Poinsett. The soil is uniformly a deep rich, black loam, under laid with porous yellow clay. The surface is gently rolling and is fairly well drained. The drainage flows into the mentioned lakes, and they in turn empty into the Sioux River that flows a dozen miles to the east.

With the exception of some timber growing around the lakes, this was originally a prairie country, covered with luxuriant grass, and for untold ages was an ideal summer range for vast herds of buffalo, elk, deer, and antelope.

It can never be known who the first white men were to enter the township, but the first we have any record of were General John C. Fremont and Dr. Joseph N. Nicollet, who passed through the township and discovered and named Lake Albert in the summer of 1838. Lake Albert, or Lake Abert, as the name was given by General Fremont, was named after Colonel J. J. Abert, at that time chief of the topographical engineers. As the lake region of eastern South Dakota was for ages a favorite hunting and trapping ground for the Indians, there is little doubt that this section was visited at an early day, and at frequent intervals by traveling fur traders, but they have left no record behind, and not even a relic has ever been found in this township to remind us of their visits.

The township was divided into sections and quarter sections in the summer of 1873. The township boundaries were first run out and marked, and later the subdivisions were made. The subdividing of township 112, Range 53 was begun on the 26th day of July, and finished August first, 1873. The survey was made by Mark W. Bailey. When the corner of a section was determined, a mound was thrown up and a wooden stake, properly marked, was driven into the top of the mound. Four holes were dug on the section lines radiating from the mound and about four feet from it, each hole about sixteen inches square and about ten inches deep. The quarter corners placed midway on the section lines between the section corners, were similarly marked except that only two holes were dug.

At the time the survey was made the only white man living anywhere near was a man by the name of Mortimer, living with his Indian wife in the timber of the Oakwood Lakes about six miles to the east.

The first white settler in the township was Lewis Christensen, a native of Denmark, who settled on the east bank of Lake Albert, on the eastern border of the township in June 1877. A couple of weeks later Andrew Johnson came and filed on land just north of Lewis Christensen. That same fall Carl Engval came and filed on land that

bordered on Lakes Badger and Thisted. The following spring two brothers of Lewis Christensen, Mat and Peter, arrived and located a little farther south, Peter's land lying on the east bank of Lake Thisted.

Lake Thisted was named by Christensen after a lake near his old home in Denmark. About this same time, the spring of 1878, Jorgen Damm and Chris Johnson arrived and located south of Lake Thisted. A year later Chris Johnson, while hunting among the timber along the lake, was struck by lightning and killed. This was the first death among the settlers in the township.

Late in the fall of 1878, a party of Indians was seen trapping muskrats around the lakes. None of the settlers knew anything about Indians except the bloodcurdling stories they had heard of Indian massacres, and they were somewhat alarmed, but after a while the Indians went away, never to return.

During the summers of 1878 and 1879 a few more settlers found their way into the township and filed on claims. Among them were Jonas Nelson, locating on the west bank of Lake Albert; the Stordahl family, locating at the south end of the lake; the Palmer brothers and the Milineaux family, locating in the south part of the township; and John Quinn, locating in the eastern part of the township. John Quinn, with his brother Tom, and Dr. W. F. Nichols, drove into what is now Badger township in the latter part of April 1879, and being struck with the beauty of the country among the lakes and the richness of the soil, decided to look no farther. Each of them filed on a homestead and tree claim, Dr. Nichols' choice being a half section just north of Lake Thisted. During the summer he hired a surveyor and had a townsite on his claim, but nothing ever came of it, and now the name he gave it is even forgotten. Tom Quinn stayed only through the summer, and Dr. Nichols also soon tired of pioneer life and went back east.

On June 26th, 1879, just as the Quinns had finished dinner, they saw something coming down from the hills a mile or more to the east that they at first thought was an ox, but as they were looking, it broke into a run, and then they were sure it was a buffalo. They hastily put their horses to the wagon and Tom secured the only weapon they had, an old fashioned muzzle-loading 44 caliber Colts Navy revolver. While they were hitching up, Peter Christensen came along with a rifle also on a hunt for the buffalo, and they all climbed into the wagon and started north to head off the buffalo. At that time they were living in a shack on the northeast bank of Lake Thisted. John Quinn had a strip of breaking on his claim a mile north that ran a half a mile east and west. The buffalo struck in the south furrow of this breaking and went loping along toward the west as the hunters came up out of a swale from the south, when he turned north across the breaking. As the team struck the breaking, Tom and Peter, thinking they could make better time afoot on such rough going, jumped out, taking the guns with them. Knowing that the buffalo would soon strike Lake Albert if he continued running north, and believing he would turn south and try to pass around the south point, John Quinn unhitched his horses and turning one of them loose, he jumped on the other and ran west for the point of the lake. Sure enough, as he came down the long hill, there came the big buffalo, a huge bull, running swiftly along the shore and it became a nip and tuck race for the point. As they

approached the point and every jump was bringing them nearer together, John longed for his old navy revolver, but the bull edged by just in front of him and he did not even have a stone to throw at him. However, the sprit of the chase was in him and he continued to pursue for more than a mile, and then stopped on a high point and watched the buffalo until he disappeared over the hill on the line between sections 18 and 19, nearly a mile away. From the time the buffalo was first seen until he disappeared, he had covered a distance of more than six miles, and he had made the whole distance on the run. That was the last buffalo ever seen in the township.

It is a good explanation of the stamina and endurance of those hardy beasts that have survived from the prehistoric days, prospered among the Indians, and faced the white man with little or no concern whatsoever.

In July 1879, Peter and Mat Christensen started a store on the east bank of Lake Thisted in front of Peter's house. Peter tended the store and Mat ran the farm. A month or two later a post office was established in the store and was called Pleasant Valley. This store and post office continued to serve the surrounding county for a number of years until the Milwaukee railroad was built through the country, when Peter gave it up and moved to Oldham to engage in the store business there.

In the fall of 1879 the Dakota Central Branch of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, running west from Tracy, Minnesota, was completed into Volga. Up to this time, Watertown had been the nearest railroad point. In the spring of 1880 the road was pushed on westward and about October first was completed to the Missouri River at Pierre. As soon as the road reached the points now occupied by Arlington and Lake Preston, these towns were started and the former became the trading point for the eastern portion and the latter became the trading point for the western portion of the territory now included in Badger Township. Arlington was first named Nordland. After a few years the name was changed to Denver, but the post office department refused to accept that name, so it was finally changed to Arlington. For a time the post office was named Nordland, the railroad station was named Denver, and the town was named Arlington.

The spring of 1880 saw the beginning of the great migration into Dakota Territory that was to continue for the next three years until the whole of what is now South Dakota lying east of the Missouri River was covered with settler's shacks, and little towns and villages. During this summer, many new settlers came to Badger Township, taking up most of the land in the eastern half of the township and a strip along the southern edge. All of the available tree claims entries were taken, on quarter section in each.

A great many of the homesteaders were young unmarried men and the rest were young married couples, with here and there an older couple coming with their boys. Few of them had more than a few hundred dollars to start with, and some had only enough to pay the filing fees on their land. A great many built sod houses, some lived in tar paper covered shacks, and a few, a very few, had small houses that were sided and plastered. All the stables were built of sod with the roofs covered with slough hay. The fuel that was almost universally used was hay twisted into "cats." The hay growing on the sloughs

in those early days grew very rank and heavy and was plentiful and cost only a little labor to gather. A few of the settlers had horse teams, but most of them used oxen for their motive power. The first duty of the settler after providing his family with a shelter and his stock with a stable was to break up the sod. The sod was very tough and the plow lay had to be kept as sharp as possible and even then it took four good oxen, or horses, to pull a single 14-inch plow. Four oxen would break an acre or more a day, and pick their living on the prairie, while grain had to be furnished for the horses, so the oxen were the favorite team for this kind of work. The breaking seasons lasted from about the 20th of May until the first of July. Sod broken before or after would not rot and make poor producing land for several years. Very little was raised on the land the summer it was broken except a little sod corn, some potatoes, and rutabagas. Some settlers raised flax on new breaking but many others did not think it profitable in the long run.

The first three winters after the first settlement was made in the township were very fine. The winter of 1878 and 1879 was especially nice, the only storm of the winter coming early in April, after seeding had commenced. Just a little more than six months after this April storm came the notorious October blizzard of 1880. The season had been a very favorable one and the farmers were busy gathering in their crops and getting fixed for winter. At daylight on the morning of October 15th a fine rain was falling. This soon turned to snow and a person could not see a yard away. This continued all that day and the next and the next until about dark of the third day, when the wind went down and the storm was over. The next day the country was buried under a pall of snow, some of the drifts being six to eight feet deep.

After the blizzard there was two months of fairly good fall weather and most of the snow went off, but some of the big drifts remained until late in April the following year. Although the storm was a severe one, the temperature did not get very low and there was no loss of life in the township either among the settlers or their livestock. In a little more than a week the Chicago and Northwestern had their track shoveled out and trains running again, and everything went on as usual until just after Christmas when the next blizzard came. Others came along in their order early in January and after each storm it became harder to dig out the railroad tracks, as the snow shoveled out of the cuts only made the cuts that much deeper. About noon on January 20th, 1881, a freight train succeeded in getting as far as Volga and stopped there. This was the last train to get as far west on this road until the sixth of the following May.

During January there was a breathing spell between blizzards of several days, but during the month of February they never came so close together as to be almost continuous. There was never more than one half day of good weather between storms during the month. It would come from the northwest for three days, fine pellets of ice almost like a mist and driven with such terrible force that one could not face it, and after a few hours of rest it would come back from the southeast for three more days. So the weary days dragged on. There was so much snow on the ground that the valleys among the coteaus south of Lake Poinsett were filled level with the surrounding hills. There were hardships endured by the settlers in the township, but no deaths, and there were few

deaths occasioned by storms in the territory. The reason for this was all the storms with one exception came up in the night when people were in their homes.

Fuel was the worst problem of the settlers. Most of the timber was cut around the lakes, and after that was gone hay was the only thing left. It took two persons to get an armful of hay out of a stack, one to pull it out and one to hold it from blowing away. Of course, the coffee mill had to be kept going, grinding wheat for bread, but there was plenty of wheat and the appetites were good. Tea, coffee, sugar, kerosene, and tobacco had to be gone without.

During the month of March the storms began to abate but the cold remained intense. Not a drop fell from the eaves during the entire month. The first half of April passed without a sign of spring, then the wind changed into the south and the sun began to have its way with the snow. The mass of snow was so great, however that it was the nineteenth of April before it really began to thaw, and by the evening of the 21st, it was all gone. Every lake and slough and hollow was full of water and every watercourse was a raging torrent. The Sioux River was six miles wide in places, and the writer stood on the bank south of Estelline and counted twenty homesteader's houses standing in water. The outlet from Lake Thisted into Lake Albert was over half a mile wide and the current was so deep and swift it was impossible to ride a horse through it.

About four o'clock on the afternoon of May 6th, 1881, the first freight train since the blockage, came as far west as Volga. The train consisted of two engines and about a dozen freight cars. As they crossed the Sioux Bottoms one engine was running about a mile ahead of the train. The only freight brought in for the people of Volga was a carload of farm machinery, a barrel of sugar, and two barrels of whiskey.

For months the settlers had been declaring vehemently that as soon as the roads opened up so they could get out, they would leave the country. They said it never was intended for white men to live in anyway, and was only fit for Indians and buffaloes. When the warm sunny days of spring came and the grass was springing green on the prairies, instead of leaving the territory, the railroads were literally blocked for weeks with new settlers coming in. In fact, for three weeks the roads could not bring in a single sack of flour to feed the hungry settlers, but every car was filled with immigrants movables.

Unless the old timers could buy, borrow or steal provisions from the new comers they still had to keep the coffee mills at work.

The winter of 1880 and 1881 has always been known, and probably always will be known, as the hard winter. Its severity can hardly be exaggerated, yet in spite of that fact and in spite of the other fact of the settlers being so ill prepared for such a winter, it is remarkable that there was so little actual suffering among them. The reason doubtless is that they were possessed with two of the greatest blessing that life can give. Youth and health.

P. R. Crothers, 1925

The flood of new settlers coming into the territory in the spring of 1881 completed the settlement of what was to be Badger Township, and the tide rolled on to the west.

The character of the population of the Township had now been definitely determined and the process of building homes, developing the land, organizing society in the shape of civil government, schools and churches, had begun.

The population of the township was made up largely of Scandinavians, Germans and Native Americans. In a general way, the Danes occupied the eastern and northeastern portions, surrounding Lake Albert and Lake Thisted. A few families of Swedes were in the northwestern corner, a large Norwegian settlement was in the southwestern corner, and overrunning into Denver, Baker, and Hartland townships. About a dozen German families occupied the west central portion and the Native Americans, of English, Scotch, Irish, and German descent, were in the southern and central portions.

During the first few years after the settlement had begun, the bachelor portion of the population would leave the territory late in the fall for the pineries of their old homes in the east, many of them coming back in the spring with their brides. During this period the population had also been increasing in the natural way. The first white child born in the township was Albert Christensen, son of Mr. And Mrs. Lewis Christensen, the first white settlers.

This interesting event occurred on the 15th of October, 1878. This honor should have belonged to Albert's cousin, Anna Christensen, as she was born about two months earlier, but Peter had not finished building his house on his own claim and at the time Anna was born, his family was stopping with a neighbor over the line in Brookings County.

Previous to 1882 the crops grown in the township were small, as the settlers had little money to buy farm tools and the tough prairie sod had to be broken and subdued. During the period between the close of the Civil War and the settlement of the township the methods of harvesting grain in the middle west were undergoing rapid development. First came the reaper that cut the grain and threw it off in loose bundles to be bound by hand and then the harvester where two men stood on the machine and bound the grain as it was cut and elevated up to them. In the later seventies the wire binder began to come into use, but this machine was never entirely satisfactory. About 1880 the Wood Company brought out a twine binder. This was rather a crude affair but it worked, and the next year Deering and McCormick companies came out with the Appleby binders, that soon became the standard grain binders throughout the country. These machines were rapidly adopted by our settlers and by their use the prairies of waving grass were soon changed to fields of waving grain. Wheat at the time was the staple crop and although the rich prairie soil produced bountiful crops the price received was so low that the farmers were little better off at the end of the year than they were at the beginning.

The government's calling and destroying the greenbacks and demonetizing silver, following the period of wild speculation at the close of the Civil War, brought on the panic of 1873, and this was followed by twenty-five years of extremely hard times. For fifteen years following the settlement of our township the price of wheat ranged from forty to fifty cents per bushel. Butter and eggs brought from five to eight cents and two and a half cents a pound was considered a fair price for fat hogs. A good cow could be bought for from eight to ten dollars. Some of the settlers who were unfortunate enough to get into debt found themselves unable to pay their interest and were closed out and left the country in disgust. The more thrifty ones kept out of debt and hung on.

The first few years following the hard winter were wet and all the lakes and low places were filled with water. Trapping muskrats became a favorite winter pastime. So many pelts were marketed in Arlington during these years that it came to be called the Muskrat City. As the dryer years came on in the later eighties, the shallow wells began to go dry and the settlers had to put in most of their spare time digging this region, but it is from sixty to four hundred feet below the surface and no one at that time knew it was there, or how to get it.

In the fall of 1882 a school district was formed in the east end of the township, called by the county board, District Number 7. Bonds were voted to build a schoolhouse near the southwest corner of Mat Christensen's homestead. The first officers of the district were J. H. Quinn, Peter Christensen, and Thomas Clelland. The first election ever held in the township was in connection with the organization of this district. The contract was let for the building of the schoolhouse and although the price paid was very much higher than afterward paid for similar buildings the contractor was not satisfied, but tried to get more money from the district. This the officers refused to pay, so the contractor locked the door and refused to finish the building until his demands were met. This brought on a deadlock that lasted for several weeks. One morning the door of the schoolhouse was seen to be broken down. The officers, discovered this, took possession, put in a new door lock and kept the key themselves. They threatened to finish up the building themselves and not pay the contractor. This brought about a settlement and the building was finished and paid for according to contract. The first school was held the summer of 1883 with Miss Clara House as teacher.

During the session of the Territorial Legislature of 1883, General W. H. Beadle secured the passage of a law that was known as the School Township System. Under this law the county board of Kingsbury County divided the county into school townships, on May 8th, 1883, and ordered an election to be held in each township for the purpose of choosing a name for the township and electing three officers, a director, a clerk and a treasurer. The election in this township was held in the schoolhouse number 7 on June 18th, 1883, and J. H. Quinn and A. A. Anderson and Robert Crothers were appointed judges of the election. At this election the name of Richland was chosen and Peter H. Thompson was elected direction. J. H. Quinn was elected clerk and E. C. Stearns was elected treasurer. The director was elected for three years, the clerk for two years, and the treasurer for one year. In 1884, the County Board changed the name of Richland to Badger. The second teacher in the township and the first to be employed under the

township system was Miss Carrie Spilde. Her contract, dated May 5, 1884, was for two months at $25.00 per month and was signed by P. H. Thompson, director, J. H. Quinn, clerk, and Robert Crothers, treasurer.

Up to the fall of 1883 the township had never had any part in running the county or territory, but at this time the County Board designated the territory included in the school township as an election precinct and John Weidenkopf's home as the polling place for the general election held November 6th, of that year. It was also ordered that the township should vote on the question as to whether it favored the organization of a township government. As the vote for township government was favorable, an election was called for March 4th, 1884, to elect township officers and to vote money for carrying on the township. The election was held in the schoolhouse and the following officers were elected; supervisors, Thomas Clelland, chairman, H. J. Webb, and Andrew R. Nelson; clerk, Peter Christensen; treasurer, A. A. Anderson; assessor, Hiram Perkins. As the people were new at this kind of work, they forgot to raise money for expenses, so another meeting was called for June 7th at the home of Andy Waite, on the northeast corner of section 29, T. 112, R.53. At this meeting, $4,200.00 was voted for the general fund and $200.00 for the road fund. The latter amount was for planks for bridges and was in addition to a tax of ten mills on the dollar that was to be worked out on the roads.

In 1883, a petition was circulated, calling for an election for the purpose of voting bonds to build a schoolhouse in the southwest part of the township. As the amount of the bonds asked for seemed to be more than needed for the purpose, the bonds were voted down. Another election was soon called for the same purpose, and asking for the same amount and was again voted own. For the third time an election was called and the county superintendent of schools Mr. George A. Williams, was asked to be present and use his influence to persuade the voters to support the schoolhouse proposition. The bonds were again voted down, but it did not take Mr. Williams long to find out what the trouble was and at his suggestion another election was called to vote a like amount of bonds to build two schoolhouses, one in the southwest corner and one in the southern part of the township. This time the bonds carried and the schoolhouses were built. The following year two more schoolhouses were built, one in the northern part and one in the northwestern corner. Some years later two other schoolhouses were built, one in the western part and the other near the center.

In the month of March during one of these early years, the body of a young man was found near the bank of Lake Albert with a bullet hole in his forehead. There had been a light fall of snow a short time before and part of it had melted, but enough remained to show that a wagon had turned off the road to the spot where the body lay and had turned and gone back to the road. The body was taken to Arlington and identified as a young man living near Lake Preston with his mother and step-father. It was shown at the inquest that he and the step-father had quarreled a few days before and the young man had been driven off by the step-father and ordered not to return. Not finding any work that day he had returned to his mother's home that evening and that night had disappeared. No attempt was ever made to bring the guilty parties to justice, the only excuse offered was that it would cause the county a lot of expense. A short time

afterward the family left and went to Chicago, where, a couple of years later, the step-father killed his wife and then committed suicide.

When the prairies were first settled, they were covered with the bones of buffaloes. Sometimes the whole skeletons could be found. In the spring after the Hard Winter many fresh bones and pieces of torn fur of the antelope could be found where the wolves had run them down and killed them in the deep snow. At this time the buffalo, elk, deer and antelope had disappeared never to return and the only wild animals of the larger sort that were left were the gray wolf, the badger, the jackrabbit, the skunk, and once in a while the red fox. Around the lakes and ponds there were a few minks and many muskrats.

Of the smaller animals there were a few weasels and the prairies were alive with the striped gophers and ground squirrels. There were very few snakes and they were of the small striped variety. Prairie chickens were very abundant and during the fall and spring the lakes would fairly swarm with wild ducks and geese. As the prairies were broken up the buffalo bones and skulls soon disappeared.

In the winter of 1883-84 a vast number of the great arctic owls came down from the north and stayed through the winter. A few of these owls were nearly pure white, but most of them were mottled with brown tipped feathers. One of them that was caught in a trap measured five feet four inches from tip to tip across the wings. Previous to this winter they had been seen only rarely. When spring came in 1884 the owls disappeared and only occasionally has one been seen here since. What drove them down from their northern home is not known. That winter in the territory was very mild. During these first years songbirds were very scarce on the prairies, the meadowlark being about the only one. The other birds more common were the plover, killdeer, with swarms of blackbirds around the lakes and a few crows and buzzards. As groves of trees began to appear and watering troughs were established many other varieties common to the more eastern states came to make their homes with us. The plover was soon killed off by pothunters and are now extinct.

The first religious services ever held in the township were in the home of Peter R. Nelson in the southwestern part of the township in the summer of 1881. The services were conducted in the Norwegian language by Rev. Jacobson, a preacher of the Lutheran Church. A little later, Rev. Henderly located in the township and another congregation was organized, but the two soon united and a church was built just across the line in Baker Township. This church has been from the earliest days a power for good in the community.

In 1889 a German Lutheran Church was organized and a church building erected in the western part of the township. This church was rebuilt in 1914.

The first religious services in the English language were held in what was known as the Barstow Schoolhouse in the summer of 1886. The meetings were conducted by a man named Herring. He was not an ordained minister, but was a member of the

Wesleyan Methodist Church. He continued his ministry for about two years without any organization being made. The most of the English-speaking settlers in the township came from non-church going families and were not much interested in religion. Mr. Herring's work was as a volunteer missionary, and while he saw little results from his work he at least aroused an interest in church matters and after he had gone, Rev. George W. Crater a Congregational preacher, was secured to take his place. Rev. Crater began his work in the township on July first 1888, and on August 26th, 1888, he succeeded in organizing the Badger Congregational Church with a membership of ten. In 1889 a new schoolhouse was built near the center of the township and the church services were held in it thereafter. In the winter of 1890 a series of meetings were held by Rev. Crater that resulted in the conversion of a large number of the settlers and about thirty new members were added to the church. In 1902 a church building was erected about one half mile west of the present site of the village of Badger. This building was afterward moved into the village and very much enlarged.

In 1889 a Danish Lutheran Church was organized and the following year forty acres of land was bought near the northern part of the township and a small church and parsonage were erected. The first pastor of this church was Rev. K. Knutsen. A few years later a small building was built in the eastern part of the township to accommodate the members living in that part of the township. In 1909 a fine large church building was erected across the road from the old one and a few years later the parsonage was rebuilt and enlarged. This church has always been a strong organization and well supported.

At the beginning of the present century a new sect appeared in the eastern part of the township, mostly among the Danes, that called themselves "God's People." A church building was soon erected on the eastern border of the township and soon after a split occurred and another building was erected near the first one. Some years afterward the church was reunited and the two old buildings were torn down and a fine new building put in their place.

It has been mentioned that as the dry years came on in the later eighties the shallow wells of the settler's began to go dry and the problem of finding water for livestock became of utmost importance. Believing that plenty of water was to be found deeper down in the earth, P. R. Crothers employed a man to drill a deep well on his place in the fall of 1888. A depth of 250 feet was reached without finding water when cold weather came on and the work had to be stopped for the winter. The next spring another man undertook the job and after six weeks work got a hole down over 700 feet, but the men were inexperienced and no water was found. This ended the work for a time. About two years later John Weidenkopf employed an experienced well driller and got a good well at about 140 feet. This was the first deep well in the township and soon solved the water problem.

About 1888 the town of Hetland was started on the Chicago and Northwestern Railway about midway between Arlington and Lake Preston, and this brought a market town several miles nearer to many of the farmers in the township.

The hard times caused by the low prices of farm products had caused a great deal of unrest among the people. The laboring people were trying to solve their problem by the formation of unions, and the farmers were also trying out farm organizations. In the middle northwest the Farmers Alliance had become quite strong and in the summer of 1889 a local organization was formed in the township, with J. H. Quinn as president, P. R. Crothers as secretary, and A. E. Hubbard as treasurer. Meetings were held once a month or oftener and many weighty matters were discussed. Many things that have happened in later years can be traced to the influence of this organization.

In the summer of 1880 owing to the late spring, the crops were rather poor, but for the ten years following the crops were very good. In the summer of 1891 the rainfall was rather limited, but the rains came at just the right times and the result was one of the best grain crops that has ever been harvested in the township. The year 1891 is still known as the year of the big crop. The price of wheat during the fall and early winter averaged around 75 cents per bushel at the local markets, and this was a big price compared to what had prevailed for the previous ten years.

The big crop with the good price gave the settlers their first real boost on the road to prosperity. The summer of 1894 was very dry, no rain falling from the second of May to the 24th of June. Oats and barley were almost a failure and wheat averaged from four to six bushel per acre. This came the nearest to a crop failure ever experienced in the township.

During the week from June 19th to 24th, when the crops were burning up and everything looked the darkest, the local Alliance put on what would now be called a Chautauqua, in the grove of natural timber between Lake Badger and Lake Thisted. Two speakers from Michigan, one from Kansas and one from Minnesota and several from our own state were present during the week, three bands were present, at different times during the week, and the Three Graces a famous trio of singers from Madison, South Dakota, were present during the whole week and were the most popular of the entertainers. There was no charge made either to the grounds or entertainment and people came by the hundreds, most of them in lumber wagons, some of them for thirty or forty miles. Saturday afternoon with a rainstorm coming up from the west, the meetings closed with a song by the Three Graces. Before singing one of them announced that that was to be the last time they would ever sign together in public, as one of them was about to leave the state. Then they sang:

"We will all meet again in that morning land,
Where life's shadows will come no more."

In 1890 in the month of June the State Alliance in session at Huron issued a call for a convention to meet in Huron the following month for the purpose of organizing in a new party. The local Alliance sent delegates to both of these meetings and thus took part in the first movement that resulted in the organization of what was afterward known as the Populist Party. During the years this party was in existence nine tenths of the voters in the township voted the populist ticket.

P. R. Crothers, 1925

Following the hard winter of 1880-81, the winters were quite mild for several years until the winter of 1887-88. By January of 1888 a heavy fall of snow lay on the ground. On the 11th of January the wind blew hard all day from the south and by night the weather had moderated very much. The morning of the 12th, the sun rose clear and the air had a balmy feel like spring. The wind blew intermittently, dying down to a dead calm for ten or fifteen minutes followed by violent gusts from the south for a few minutes. This condition continued all the forenoon and just at noon, without any warning whatever, a terrific blizzard struck out of the northwest and continued all that afternoon and most of the night. This was the most destructive blizzard that has ever struck the state. A few people and considerable stock lost their lives in the storm. The reason for the unusual destructiveness of this storm was that it came up so suddenly in the middle of a nice warm day. There was no loss of life in the township either of people or stock, although a few persons were caught out by the storm.

The first livestock brought into the township were scrubs and no attempt was made to introduce any improved blood until l889 when a registered short horn bull was brought in by P. R. Crothers. This animal was of excellent type and proponent in breeding, and his offspring were so superior to their scrub dams that the people became at once converted to the idea of improved stock and the township has since been noted for its splendid cattle, hogs, and poultry.

In the summer of 1891, a man by the name of Holcomb from De Smet brought his team-threshing rig into the township and began operating. Near the latter part of the threshing season Mr. Holcomb found some business matter required his absence from the rig for a day or two and his brother offered to take his place on the rig. The brother was a stranger in the country, having come from the east a few days before with his bride of a week on their wedding trip. The steam engine was not in very good repair at the time as the steam gauge was out of commission and it was suspected that the safety valve was not working as it should. However, Mr. Holcomb seemed to understand its weaknesses and managed to keep it running. In his absence, it was decided that the separator man was more familiar with the engine and should take charge of it, and the brother was to operate the separator. A setting of grain was threshed out on the U. E. Reeves place and the rig was moved about a mile and had just turned off the road toward a setting of grain on the August Larson place, when both ends of the boiler blew out. A team and wagon with a half dozen men in it was standing beside the grain stacks nearly 100 yards away and the front end of the boiler landed just in front of the team and buried itself in the ground there. The engineer stood directly behind the boiler and he was thrown over the top of the separator and landed in an adjoining field more than 200 feet away. He was alive when picked up, but died a few hours later. At the time of the explosion, Mr. Holcomb's brother was walking beside the separator and was struck on the head by a piece of the boiler and instantly killed.

On Thanksgiving Day 1896 a heavy fall of soft pellets fell and froze into a solid mass, making the best sleighing every known in the country. A heavy loaded sleigh could be driven anywhere over the prairies, leaving scarcely a track. This condition

continued until after Christmas, when a rain fell and spoiled the sleighing. This was followed by a heavy fall of snow through January and February, but the weather was not otherwise severe.

At the close of the nineteenth century, the prices of farm products had begun to improve and in consequence, a small measure of prosperity began to come to the farmers. The old sod shanties and tar paper covered shacks had disappeared and comfortable house and barns had taken their places. The trees that nearly every settler had planted around his buildings in the early days had become real shelter belts, very much improving the looks of the country.

In 1898 the farmers of Badger and Denver townships untied in building a co-operative elevator in Hetland and this helped to increase the price for their products and to add to their prosperity. (At the present time, 1925, this elevator is still running under the same management and is the oldest co-operative elevator in the estate.)

In 1901 a country store had been started in the northern part of the township by James Johnson and a little later a post office was added, called Denmark. This was supplied by a star route mail service from Hetland, three times each week.

The early years of the twentieth century brought in many changes that greatly affected the conditions of life on the farm. The first of these to reach Badger Township was the telephone. In 1902 Mr. C. C. Maxwell an Arlington druggist, had built a small exchange in Arlington and then ran a farm line out north on the county line and extending into the eastern part of the township. About the same time, a small company of Hetland men were building an exchange in Hetland and they ran a line through the center of the township as far as the Denmark store. A switch was installed at the home of John Weidenkopf between the two lines so service could be had on both lines by any patron. In the following years other lines were built until the whole township was covered with a network of wires. The automobile, another improvement that tended to annihilate space and destroy the isolation of the farm, began to invade the township about 1910, and soon every farmer had his car. The first farm electric lighting plants were installed in 1916, and local water pressure systems began to be introduced at about the same time. In 1922 the first radios were brought in.

The great handicap under which the farmers of this township labored for many years was the long haul to market. No railroad entered the township or even approached it nearer than several miles. In 1906 the South Dakota Central, a Sioux Falls organization, had built a road from Sioux Falls to a point about twenty five miles south and east of the township and was headed for Watertown. A direct line to their destination would take the road through the western edge of Brookings County and between Lake Albert and Lake Poinsett. This route would take the road lengthwise of a range of hills called the Coteaus. Many believed a better route lay west of the Coteaus through Arlington and passing through the township of Badger near its center. John Weidenkopf, one of the enterprising citizens of the township, went to see the officials of the road several times to induce them to take the latter route and was finally asked how much

bonus would be given. To be able to answer that question, he called a meeting and $5,000.00 was pledged in one afternoon. A new survey was made and the road located on the new route and in the spring of 1907 the grading contracts were let into Watertown and the work began. During the summer a townsite was located on the section line between the Weidenkopf and Marquardt farms. In deeding the land to the company, Mr. Weidenkopf retained a site on the sidetrack for an elevator. An elevator of 35,000 bushel capacity was built on the site late in the fall of 1907, and was finished about ten days before the road was opened. In just a week after the elevator was opened it was filled to capacity, mostly with barley. As no grain could be shipped until the road was opened, the elevator had to close. Just at this time the bankers panic occurred and barley dropped from around a dollar a bushel to about half that price and it looked for a while as if Mr. Weidenkopf would be a heavy loser, but before the grain could be shipped out the people had recovered from their scare and the price of grain had gone back nearly to its old level.

The new town was named Badger and is located nearly in the center of the township and soon became a thriving village and became the marketplace for the whole township and quite a strip of territory in Brookings County. Three elevators, a lumberyard and stockyards were located on the right of way. The town also contains a bank, two general stores, a hardware store, a drug store, a barbershop, three cream stations, a restaurant, a garage, a telephone and post office, a blacksmith shop, and a livery and dray barn. The town also has a school, a church, a depot and two halls. One of the elevators burned in 1923 and has not been rebuilt. A Farmers Co-operative Company owns one of the other elevators, the lumberyard and also has a stock-shipping department.

About 1910 marks the beginning of a new era in the methods of farming. Up to this time grain raising was the main business and stock raising was a side line of only moderate importance. Black rust in the wheat and the prevalence of weed pests in the grain fields began to make grain farming unprofitable. More attention began to be given to the raising of corn and potatoes and the farmers began to experiment with clover and alfalfa. Hog raising soon became one of the most important industries. In the fall of 1910 the first herd of registered dairy cattle was started in the township. These cattle were of the Holstein-Friesian breed. During that same fall a state organization of Holstein breeders was started with the secretary's office located in the township. During recent years, dairying has claimed more and more of the attention of the farmers, until at the present time it is one of the important industries. The first silo was erected in 1913 and the first cow testing association was organized in1923.

In 1910 began the worst drought that has ever affected this part of the state. Beginning about the first of June, very little rain fell for more than a year. The drought did not affect the crop of 1910 very much and a fairly good crop was harvested that year, but in 1911, many fields were never harvested.

During the World War the township "went over the top" in furnishing men for the army, in the purchase of liberty bonds, and in raising funds for the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. Two of her native sons made the supreme sacrifice in France. Jens Neilson

was killed in battle and Neil Nelson died of wounds. The former was a son of Chris Neilson and the latter was a son of Jonas Nelson. Both pioneer settlers of the township. Another native-born son of the township was severely wounded in battle, Ed Larsen, son of Paul Larsen, another pioneer settler.

The big prices paid for farm products during the closing years of the war and for a couple of years after, caused a boom in land values and a period of wild speculation that had its center in Iowa and spread into the nearby states. The boom reached its high point in South Dakota in the summer of 1919 and as high as $250.00 an acre was offered for improved farms in the township during that summer. Very little land changed hands in the township during the boom and in consequence very few failures followed the collapse of the boom although “times were hard” for the next few years.

There used to be an old saying that a country had to have about three classes of settlers before they became permanent. The first settlers soon drifted on to the west and were soon followed by their successors and it took the third class to really settle down and stick. This cannot be said of Badger Township. The first settlers were stayers. If there was a drifter among them he was generally bought out by one of his neighbors. It is safe to say that a very large percent of the land at the present time is either owned by one of the pioneer settlers or his descendants. The people as a rule have been industrious and thrifty, the soil is rich and the rainfall is usually abundant and it is doubtful if there is anywhere in the state a more prosperous community.

So far as known there has never been a crime committed in the township and no citizen of the township has ever been convicted of crime.

It is now almost half a century since the founding of homes first began in the township and the old pioneers are fast passing away, but they are leaving to their descendants a heritage rich in honor and achievement, to say nothing of the more material forms of wealth that are visible on every hand.

P. R. Crothers, 1925