

DIVIDING THE TOWNSHIP IN 1896

The Fredenberg area, Township 52-15 north of Canosia, has the odd distinction of being incorporated twice under different names, but there was one compelling reason: an impassable LaVaque Road.

In September of 1896, 27 voters from Township 52-15 and the northeast sections of Canosia petitioned the county for a new township, stating that they were unable to get to meetings at the Canosia Town Hall because of "lack of facilities for traveling back and forth from the north and south parts of the town." The county commissioners agreed, Dinham Township was formed and new officers elected in October: W. McComber, P. Michels, S. Maleska, F. Kehtel and L. Ostrowski. Four months later, another 27 Canosia voters petitioned the county to dissolve Dinham, mainly because of previous bonded indebtedness. Commissioners refused but "agitation persisted" and Dinham was eventually dissolved.

In July of 1904, residents of Twp 52-15 and Twp 51-15 finally agreed that the north should be separated and petitioned county commissioners, declaring that "Canosia is so divided by lakes, rivers, marshes and other natural impediments...that it is inconvenient for all citizens in Township 52-15 to transact business."

The new township was named in honor of a local resident, Jacob Fredenberg, born in 1826 in New York. In the 1900 Census he is listed as a "day laborer" boarding at the Charles Campbell family home and, at 73, was the oldest person in the township.

Formation of Fredenberg was widely supported: sixty people, including Canosia Supervisors, signed the petition.

Within a month, the county granted the petition and ordered the sheriff to post three official notices: one on the front door of the Canosia Town Hall, one on "the bulletin board at the corner of Swan Lake and Hermantown Roads" (Four Corners), and one at the "corner of LaVaque and Pike Lake Roads". Official notices of Fredenberg's first town meeting were also

posted, including one "at the dam on the Cloquet River."

By 1905 Fredenberg had 77 residents but only six families. There were many single men in the township: immigrants from Canada and Europe, and some

lumbermen from the East. In 1910 the population was 115 but, by 1920, when some of the area logging operations had ended, there were only 87 residents...and a lot of old logging roads.

Town minutes, during the early 1900's, from both Fredenberg and Canosia are remarkably similar: problems with roads, cartways and whatever else was reasonably passable. Makeshift equipment was used in both townships and the minutes often include some mention of searching for the "town grader", which was usually borrowed by residents. Clerks in both townships also used a common phrase, "waiting on the Commissioners" when supervisors spent the day in Duluth, waiting in the Court House, to get help, or promises, for town roads.

Lucille Pearson's *History of Fredenberg* includes other details of pioneer transportation: the earliest Fredenberg residents found it was easier to get to Duluth by taking the train from Anatol (Taft) rather than attempting travel on the LaVaque Road. "In the early 1920's and 1930's, the LaVaque Road was impassable at spring break-up and you had to stop and let a car pass, especially through the swamp".

Both communities struggled to survive the Depression years with very meager town funds for fixing roads, but they spread employment around by hiring many residents to shovel gravel on the local cartways. While Canosia had their aptly-named Swamp Road, the two townships shared work on a short section of the Lismore Road, which was no longer a problem after it flooded and disappeared in 1929.

The county eventually took over maintenance of many major roads and, through the years, the LaVaque Road has been patched, rebuilt, ditched and rebuilt again. But, every spring, some of the more marginal town roads will continue to provide some "natural impediments".

Sources: Pearson, Lucille *History of Fredenberg, 1887-1980*; St. Louis County Auditor's Office; U.S. Manuscript Census Schedules, 1900; Minnesota Manuscript Census Schedule, 1905; Van Brunt, Walter *History of Duluth and St. Louis County*

Editor's Note: This and previous articles that appeared on page 2 of the newsletter are compiled and edited by the Canosia Township Historical Society, art work by Kathryn Adams