

# *OLD STORIES*

## *WE SHOULD TELL ONCE MORE*

We see their signatures on the oldest town ledgers, yet we know little of the pioneers who built this town - immigrants, lumbermen, homesteaders and entrepreneurs. But, once in awhile, someone comes by and says, my great-grandparents settled here at the turn of the century and this road is named for them. And the storytelling begins.

Few are left now to tell of the shared losses in the Great Fire, the influenza epidemic that followed, the days of comforting families and burying the dead. Some remember newly-found prosperity gone with the Crash of '29 and the years when many township men earned a few dollars as road workers during the Depression. Veterans from four wars are buried in our cemetery and there are more stories to tell of "coming home." Who remembers the old logging railroad, the party line telephones, bad roads and school mud vacations, the very first Social Security checks for our elderly, the Justices of the Peace, the town grader and farmers cutting hay on our cemetery.

Another visitor says, I grew up here and we spent our summers at the roller rink and the Auto Club and we had 4-H Club and there was that big old stove for dinners in the Town Hall, and we went to the dance hall at Caribou Lake, and our own local dairy sold milk and eggs, and there were many fried chicken eateries and rural taverns and, yes, I remember the polio epidemic and the years when the volunteer fire department got started. It seems that, when we move away, memories of town life are never too much baggage to carry.

From immigrant letters to the Internet, there are many ways to research our family history, but not the least of these is community life. As Minnesota historian Paul Gruchow has said, "All history is ultimately local and personal." The past can't quite fade away because names of pioneer families will always be on our property deeds. And now, whether we're quite prosperous or just comfortable, it's when we tell the old stories that we realize how rich we really are.

*Kathryn Adams and the Canosia Township Historical Society*