

Odegard Family History

Jorgen J. Odegard immigrated from central Norway (Lillehammer, Fudslradalln) and **Oline Eriksdfr Kaurstad** immigrated from Fingebee (near Oslo). They met in the United States, married and settled in Mount Valley, Iowa. With no money and unable to earn much as laborers, they headed into Minnesota in search of free land in Santiago Township – a spot called Thousand Islands. At this time much of the land was covered in water, in time the land became sand dunes and the Odegards settled near a tamarack swamp.

The Odegards lent money to other farmers and eventually saved enough money to buy some livestock and build a log shanty. During this time (late 1800's) 5 boys and 4 girls were born to the Odegards: Ida, John, Edwin, Mathilde, Oscar, Julius, Odin, Alma and Olga. After 8 years in near poverty, Jorgen Odegard purchased acreage on the St. Francis River in Santiago Township.

The various Odegard children became storekeepers, horse traders, car dealers, bankers and legislators. All the children settled in Santiago, Glendarado, Monticello, Clear Lake, Elk River, Princeton and Milaca. Most Odegards did not have an education beyond the 3rd grade; Jorgen didn't feel education was necessary.

Ida Odegard Paulson Ericson was first married to Par Paulson (a mail carrier) and worked in a Santiago general store. In later years she married John Erickson and moved to Monticello.

John Odegard married Alma Grow in 1905 and then opened the first Ford Agency in the area (Santiago) in 1912. He offered free driving lessons with every sale, as no one knew how to operate motor vehicles. He often accepted livestock, buggies and other items in lieu of cash. He eventually started a creamery, a bank and a general store in Santiago.

Odin (O.J.) Odegard started out as a horse trainer at an early age and then went on to found Odegard Potato Company, Odegard Farm Company and the Ford dealership in Princeton. In addition, he had farms in Long Siding and on the peat bogs near Milaca. The farms raised livestock. The peat bogs were drained and used for raising potatoes, onions and carrots. During World War II Italian war prisoners were brought to the peat bogs to do the labor. The prisoners were housed in barracks-type buildings inside a fence.

Source Unknown: Resource File – at Mille Lacs Historical Society, Princeton, MN.