

the dress suit, and that agriculture is the only gainful occupation worthy of a gentleman.

In the fall of 1884 Mr. Lee was married to Miss Margaret Halverson, of Clayton county, Iowa, and in 1885 he again took up farm work. In 1889 he became the owner of the old Lee homestead in section 32, Parke township, Clay county, where he still lives.

Having held minor township offices, such as justice of the peace and clerk of his school district, he has also been twice elected to the state Legislature; the first time in 1911, and again in 1916. In the 1911 session he introduced and had passed an amendment to section 6 of article 8 of the state Constitution of Minnesota, known as the Land Loan Amendment, authorizing the loaning of surplus state funds to farmers at three per cent. interest. This amendment was submitted to the voters at the general election of 1912, but failed of ratification. It was again submitted in 1914, but failed again. In 1916, however, it received the required number of votes and became a part of the Constitution. In the 1917 session he introduced a bill known as the Grain Grading Bill, which was passed, providing for the establishment of grades of wheat on the strength of its milling and bread-producing qualities. He also initiated the section of the new Minnesota Road Law, making it optional for townships to pay the township road tax in cash or labor, and a number of other bills of state-wide importance.

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#### CHARLES BENSON.

The first settler of Strand township, where he now is the owner and operator of two hundred eighty acres of well-improved farming land and where he has been and is prominently connected with the civic, religious and co-operative business interests of the community in which he lives for many years, is Charles Benson, who was born in Norway, December 12, 1848, a son of Bernt Olson and Elizabeth Knutson (Winjevold) Winjevold, both natives of Norway, where the latter now lies buried. About 1879 the father, who was a farmer in the old country, followed his children to America and took a homestead of one hundred sixty acres in Strand township, Norman county, where the family of his daughter, Mrs. Ellen Welle, with whom he lived until his death occurred, now resides. The father and mother were the parents of the following children: Ole, whose death occurred in Norway; Anna Martha, who now resides in Norway; Charles,

the subject of this review, and Ellen, the wife of Andrew J. Welle and who now resides with her family on her father's old homestead in Strand township.

Charles Benson was reared on the old home farm in Norway, where he contributed no small amount of labor and thrift to the cultivation of the same. There during his boyhood days in his native land he received his elementary education and when he reached the age of twenty-two years he decided that the New World extended to him such a flattering opportunity that it behooved him to leave the land of his nativity and establish himself on the fertile soil of the great Northwest. In 1870 he first set foot on American soil, and in order to get a start, he came on out to Sibley county, Minnesota, where he worked out on farms and rented land until 1877. In that year he joined a party of settlers whose destination was Norman county. In this band of determined pioneers was the Gunderson family, of which several members still reside in this part of the county. For several weeks they pushed slowly northward behind their plodding ox teams, but eventually they arrived at their journey's end on June 24 or 25, 1877, and here established their homes. Immediately Mr. Benson took a homestead of one hundred sixty acres in section 34, Strand township, where he has ever since continued to live.

Many pioneer experiences came to Mr. Benson which tried his pluck and thrift, but he weathered the storm of adversity. The summer following the establishment of a home on his holding, was a very wet season, as it rained almost every day for a month. It was absolutely necessary for him to construct some kind of dwelling and to obtain the timber for the same he had to wade a small stream near the site of the home and drag it across to where he was building his house. He experienced no little difficulty in doing this because the stream, which was swollen by months of rain, came up to his neck. His house, which he finally completed under such adverse circumstances, was a rude affair, being half dug-out. During the same season, his supplies ran low and he was compelled to make a trip with his ox team to Audubon for flour. His trip was without incident until he reached the Wild Rice river where, in order to cross the stream, which was on one of its spring rampages, he had to float his wagon across on a boat. In those early days grindstones were just as necessary as they are today, but the difficulty in transporting such a bulky article out to the frontier districts made their purchase price quite high. This fact Mr. Benson found out from actual experience when he made a trip to Ada in the August of 1877 for the purpose of buying such a commodity, which cost him four cents a pound. On this trip

the water from the overflowing streams stood so high in the wagon road that pickerel swam about the wagon as he pushed forward to Ada. The settlers in the township were very few in that first year of his residence there, but since the winter of 1877-78 was an open one, many more came in from Becker county. Nothing daunted by the numerous difficulties with confronted him during the early years of his residence on his frontier farm, Mr. Benson by dint of tireless industry, consummate thrift and hard work, set about raising the necessary farm buildings, planting shade trees and turning the stubborn sod of the raw prairie. Soon good fortune came to him and he has been enabled to add to his original holding until he now has a fine farm of two hundred eighty acres of fine land, well suited to his agricultural operations. As the production of his farm increased his original buildings proved inadequate and he has replaced them all with a new set, including a comfortable farm home. He now carries on an excellent type of diversified agriculture and he breeds graded Shorthorn cattle.

During his residence in Sibley county, Mr. Benson was married to Martha Halse in October, 1873. She was a daughter of Anders and Daarte Halse, born in Norway, November 13, 1843. To this union were born five children, namely: Bennie, Annie, Allie and Martha, all of whom died young, and Mary, the only one living. Mrs. Benson died about nine months after their arrival in Norman county. Mr. Benson was married a second time on October 22, 1889, to Christie Johnson, a native of Norway, born on December 10, 1859, a daughter of John and Margrette Torska. They are the parents of ten children, all of whom are living: John, Minnie, Elmer, Elvina, Manda, Alfred, Olga, Lizzie, Gladys and Chester. Mr. Benson has always been quite active in the church circles of the community, having helped to organize two church societies: the St. Peter Norwegian Lutheran church, the first in the community, and the North Wild Rice Norwegian Lutheran church; at present, however, he is a member of the St. Paul Norwegian Lutheran church at Gary and in the affairs of this church society he and his family take a very deep interest.

Being the first settler in this vicinity, Mr. Benson has seen it grow into one of the most flourishing sections in the state, and in this development he has had no small part. After helping to organize Strand township, he was a member of the township board for many years. He has also played an important role in the educational progress of the township, having helped to organize his school district and served as school clerk for twenty years, his last term of office ending in 1916. Mr. Benson has been also an important factor in the establishment of the co-operative business interests of the town-

ship. He was interested in the Farmers Elevator at Gary and in the creamery at the same place, being a director of the latter enterprise which he helped to organize. In politics, he is an ardent advocate of prohibition, and in the local affairs of his party he is quite prominent.

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### OLE T. LEE.

Ole T. Lee, a well-known farmer of Waukon township, Norman county, where he operates his excellent farm of two hundred forty acres and is connected with the civil, social and business interests of the immediate vicinity, was born in Norway, August 18, 1857, a son of Torkel and Bertha O. (Nese) Lee. Both the father and mother were natives of Norway, where they grew up, married and reared their family. At this time the former is lying in his last resting place in his native land, but the mother is still living at an advanced age. They were the parents of the following five children: Ole, Christ, Ole, John and Gertrude. Following the example of their father, all the sons are substantial farmers, however, the subject of this review is the only member of his immediate family who has cast his lot in the United States. The only daughter, Gertrude, is a farmer's wife.

Ole T. Lee was reared to manhood on the old home farm across the stormy Atlantic and there he received his elementary education in the local schools, but since much of his time was taken with assisting the family in their common effort toward making the farm pay and since the elementary schools of those days were nothing to compare with those of the present, his early formal training was somewhat limited. Nevertheless, the practical education which he received under the actual working conditions on the home place handily served him when he struck out in farming on his own account when he came to this country. For several years he had heard good reports from his countrymen concerning the farming opportunities in America and soon he burned with desire to go and do likewise. Immediately after his marriage in 1881 he and his wife immigrated to this country and settled first in Dodge county, Minnesota, where they remained for three years, at the end of which period they moved to Stearns county, Minnesota, and then to Polk county, same state. Hearing that better opportunities awaited men of his calling in Norman county, he brought his family here in 1899 and settled on the farm on which he still lives in Waukon township. Since the improvements on his holdings at first were poor, he began