

# LeSauk Township



**Bicentennial**

**July 1 - 1976**

The following early history of LeSauk Township and Sartell is taken from the History of Stearns County, written by William Bell Mitchell and published in two volumes in 1915. These volumes belong to the Gilbert Stock family, and it is with thanks to them for the use of these books that we pass this interesting history on to you.

When Stearns County was organized in 1855, it was divided into three precincts, so-called, intended mainly to serve election purposes. The number of precincts was increased, and the boundaries were changed from time to time as the necessities and convenience of the increasing population of the county required.

At the meeting of the Board of County Commissioners on May 19, 1858, the county was divided into eleven townships, LeSauk was not one of the original townships, but a petition for township organization was presented to the County Commissioners on September 7, 1860. Some of the names appearing on the petition are Tanner, Gilmore, Feltes, Lahr, Putnam, Sawyer, Briggs, Miner, McHanna and Connell. The Sartell name does not appear to be on the petition, but the Sartell brothers figure prominently in the development of this area.

William Sartell wrote the following article on LeSauk and Sartell to be included in the Mitchell History of Stearns County. He was one of the eight sons of Joseph B. Sartell, for whom the village is named.

"LeSauk Township is situated in the northeastern part of the county, having the Mississippi River for its eastern boundary, St. Cloud on the south, St. Wendel on the west and Brockway on the north.

"The surface is comparatively level, undulating throughout the township except for a small ridge of hills in the northwestern part. Originally the

town was covered to a large extent with timber and light brush. Especially in the northwestern part there was a very good growth of oak and other hardwood, and considerable tamarack. Now the forest and brush land is rapidly giving way to fields, meadows and pastures of the best kind.

"In the central part of the township there is a pretty lake, about three-quarters of a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide. In the northeastern part of the town there is a small prairie, and one of about two thousand acres in the southern part.

"The prairie in the northeastern part is of considerable historic significance. It was included in the Long Prairie Reservation to which the Winnebago Indians were removed from Iowa, and until a few years ago many of the graves of the people of that band could still be seen.

"The only village in the town is that of Sartell. Aside from the school in this village, the town has but two school houses, one in Section 8 and one in Section 29. In view of the fact that the people are of the highest class of intelligence this fact is somewhat strange, but many causes have contributed to this condition. The town is small, occupying only about half of a regular Congressional township. And it has not been well settled. A large tract of rich land in the central part was owned for many years by the late N. P. Clarke. The topographical condition of a part of the township is not favorable to building conditions, on account of its low, flat and wet condition. Therefore, the two school houses are sufficient. District 5 has its school house in Section 8, and District 13 has its school in Section 29. The people about Sartell send their children to the school in that village, while the children in the extreme southern part of the township are educated in the school houses of Dis-

tricts 2 and 108 in St. Cloud and St. Joseph Townships. Outside of Sartell there are no churches, public halls, cemeteries or creameries.

"A grist mill with a daily capacity of 200 barrels is located in the south-eastern part at the mouth of the Sauk River. It is owned by George Hine. This is a historic mill site. In the late fifties or the early sixties, a combination saw mill and grist mill was built here by Frank Arnold and a man named Sims. Later it was owned by Arnold and Stanton, and finally by Mr. Arnold, who operated it for many years. In 1876 the old mill was torn down and a new one erected by Mr. Arnold. Some twenty years ago the mill was destroyed by fire and the present one erected.

"The Indian traders were the first white residents of LeSauk. Their story is appropriately told elsewhere in this work. Following them came Philip Beaupre, who about 1850 made a claim within the limits of this township. He spent the greater part of his time, however, at Sauk Rapids. From 1852 to 1855 he was at Pembina. Upon his return he lived for several years on his old claim. Later he located again in Sauk Rapids.

"J. B. Sartell came in 1854. At that time a number of settlers were already living here. A man named Stone was living on what is now the Bowling Brothers' farm; and a man named Condor was also living within the present limits of the same farm. A Mr. Fadden was living where the Sartell Brothers' saw mill now stands. Appleton Webb came soon afterward and lived where the Bowling Brothers' residence is now located. Joel Bailey and a Mr. Grant lived on different parts of what is now the S. J. Gillispie farm, formerly owned by the late Judge D.B. Sarle. Mr. Webb died in Brockway and is buried there. Mr. Bailey died in St. Cloud. Mr. Grant was for some time in charge of an ox team trucking between St.

Paul and St. Cloud. Other early comers were Samuel Cox Johnson, William Connell, Adam Langer and others.

"The territory comprising LeSauk was formerly embraced in the townships of Brockway and St. Cloud, but separately organized in 1860, and the first election held at the house of Harvey Sawyer, October 1. The first officials elected were: Supervisors, Harvey Sawyer, Joseph B. Sartell and Joel Bailey; Clerk, Joel Bailey; Treasurer, Appleton Webb; and Justices of the Peace, S. Putnam and Philip Beaupre. Joel Bailey was also elected School Superintendent of the township, in accordance with the school system of that day.

"The first school taught was by Elbert Hodgden, in the government blacksmith shop at the Winnebago Agency, but the exact date cannot be obtained.

"There were no churches in LeSauk until the Village of Sartell was organized. However, religious services were held in private houses, and in the school house in the northern part of LeSauk, and in the school house in the southern part of Brockway. Before the village was organized, services were also held in the school house in Section 21.

"Joseph B. Sartell, as already mentioned, arrived in 1854, and at once began to develop the community. In 1856 or 1857, he built a small mill saw mill for Harvey Sawyer at the mouth of the Watab River. Mr. Sartell operated it for awhile, and then moved to Clearwater. He afterward moved to Winnebago Prairie, and took a home-stead on what is now part of S. J. Gillispie's farm. He was ill for a long time, became discouraged with farming, and again took up the milling business. He had many interesting experiences. At one time, a war party of Chippewas borrowed his boat to cross the river and intercepted a band of Sioux, whom they surprised on Maine

Prairie and murdered twelve. For a time Mr. Sartell worked for Asa Libby in a saw mill that stood on a ledge point on the east side of the river, about three and a half miles above the present site of the paper mill. Afterward he operated a small saw mill owned by Randolph Frazee, and situated on the river near the present residence of C. B. Gregory. From there he went to Two Rivers, where he built a small saw mill of his own which he operated for two years. Then he sold it out and came to a point about a mile south of the present location of the Sartell Mill. Here he built a small water-power saw mill, which he operated for many years. It was built and rebuilt several times, and some twenty-six years ago a steam engine and planer were added. Some ten years ago, the planers were moved from the saw mill to where they now stand. The saw mill continued to be operated at the same location until about five years ago, when on account of the difficulty experienced in holding the logs below the dam of the Watab Pulp and Paper Co., it was moved to a point about one mile north of the former location. In the early days the logs were rafted down the river from Fort Ripley. Later they were driven. Now the logs are brought down from the lumber regions by rail, and then to the mill by gasoline launch.

"Sartell Village is located on both banks of the Mississippi River, in Stearns and Benton Counties, occupying about 400 acres in Sections 21 and 28, LeSauk Township, and about 300 acres in the township of Sauk Rapids. It is a little south of the central part of each township, and that part of it east of the Mississippi is bisected its full length by the line of the Northern Pacific Railroad.

"Divided as it is by a wide river, the need of a bridge has long been felt. Some two years, the matter was agitated, but there was a wide diversity of

opinion as to whether the bridge should be located above or below the dam. In the winter of 1913-14, the matter was revived, and work was soon started. It is a beautiful structure and was completed in the fall of 1914, marking a new era of prosperity for the village. It is of steel construction with a twenty-foot concrete roadway, and two concrete sidewalks. As the people live on the west bank of the river, the advantages of this bridge are at once apparent.

"The hamlet with which the village of Sartell originated consisted of a dozen or so houses occupied by the Sartells' and their employees, grouped about the saw mill, which the Sartells' have operated for many years.

"The organization of the village was due to the fact that the Watab Pulp & Paper Mill located at this point. The mill encountered many difficulties during the period of its location and construction. Persons who owned water-powers below the proposed site opposed the project, and entered very serious objections, even carrying the fight to Congress. But a petition was presented to that august body signed by 984 names, including nearly all the leading business and professional men of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids and vicinity, and the charter was granted. Work began about the middle of April, 1905. The water was low in the river at that time, but soon rose rapidly and remained high throughout the period of operations, thus entailing some ten months' extra work, and causing an additional expense of several thousand dollars. It took nearly two years to build the dam, and during that time an average of about 100 men were employed.

"Several lives were lost during the period of building. The saddest of all was that of little Carl Mathie, the bright eleven-year-old son of the manager. Carl, who was a general favorite with all the workers, was play-

ing under a bank where the men were digging, when he was caught and instantly crushed to death by a pile of hardpan which suddenly gave way. At different times five men were drowned and one or two were killed in other ways.

"The mill when erected had a daily capacity of from 80,000 to 100,000 pounds of print paper. This capacity has since been doubled. The mill is not numbered among the largest in the country, but it is one of the best equipped paper mills in the world.

"The first store in Sartell was located here some thirty or thirty-five years ago. It then occupied only a small space in the office of the Sartell mill, where the Sartells' bought supplies wholesale, and sold to a few families living in the vicinity. Later a building 12 by 16 feet was added for store purposes. But this was afterward burned, together with all of the mill books and accounts, and the township records. Since then the mill owners have kept a small supply of groceries, dry goods and shoes.

"The first building to be erected after the construction of the paper mill was started, was the Watab Hotel, which has accommodations for about thirty people. Since that time many other substantial buildings have been constructed.

"The village is named from Joseph B. Sartell, the first settler. He and his seven sons continued to reside together here. Joseph B. Sartell died in January, 1913 at the age of eighty-six years. Two of his sons, Egbert P. and Winslow L. are also dead. The other five, Charles S., Linton L., William L., Fred N. and Frank A. all live here together, a most unusual circumstance.

"A Presbyterian church was built here some five years ago at a cost of about \$3,000.

"A four-roomed school house has been erected at a cost of about \$8,000. Only the lower story is used for educational purposes. The village rents the upper story for a hall.

"Anton Smudd was the first postmaster here, receiving his appointment November 20, 1904. He held the office until January 7, 1909, when he was succeeded by Lou E. Parish, who is still serving.

"Sartell village was organized in November, 1907, and the first council meeting was held November 15th of that year. The council consisted of Charles Sartell, Anton Smudd, F. S. Payne, Charles Mayer and Fred Sartell. The council is now composed as follows - C. S. Sartell, President; F. N. Sartell, Recorder; Bernard Garding, Robert Crignon and C. F. Sartell.

"As far back as 1898 a Sunday school had held meetings in the old Sartell schoolhouse. Ten years later in February, 1908, the Rev. T. M. Finley preached a series of sermons in the new schoolhouse, afterwards making an engagement to preach once in every four weeks until the following January. It was on August 10, 1908, that the preliminary steps were taken for the organization of a church."

A name that appears over and over in the early township board books is that of John Ferschweiler. In Mitchell's History of Stearns County, he has the following to say about him:

"John Ferschweiler, for many years a resident of LeSauk Township, now of St. Cloud, was born in Trier, Germany, October 28, 1843, son of Peter and Lucy Ferschweiler. The mother died in Germany. After her death, the father married Margaret Repinger, and to this union four daughters were born. The father died March 3, 1895, at the age of seventy-six, and his wife died October 13, 1905, at the age of ninety-three. In 1857 the family came to

America, found their way west to Stearns County and settled in Section 29, LeSauk Township. The father, with such help as the son could render, broke the land and brought the wilderness under control. Thus John grew to manhood. August 17, 1864, John Ferschweiler enlisted in Company G, 11th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, went south with that regiment, and was mustered out at Fort Snelling, July 11, 1865. After the war, he returned to LeSauk Township and started to farm on seventy-eight acres presented to him by his father. From time to time he purchased land from the government, from the railroad and from private owners, until he now has three hundred acres. In the fall of 1913, he retired from the farm and is now building a fine residence on Seventh Avenue North. Mr. Ferschweiler has occupied many township offices, including the assessorship and the town chairmanship, both of which positions he held for long terms. He was school treasurer for thirty-nine years. Mr. Ferschweiler married Catherine Iten, a native of Switzerland. This union has resulted in ten children, Peter, Frank, Mary, Susan (deceased), Martin, Kate, and Jennie (twins), Rose and Margaret (twins), and Louise. Peter is at home. Frank works in the Watab Paper Mills at Watab, Minnesota. He married Cloudy Schindler, and they have five children. Mary married Michael Theisen. They have three children and live in LeSauk. Susan married Joseph Herschfeld, and had one son. Martin lives at home. Kate married Bert Young and has two children. Jennie lives at home. Rose married Matt Heinan. Margaret and Louise are at home. Mr. Ferschweiler comes of an old and honored German family. His uncle, John Ferschweiler, was an early settler and one of the first commissioners of Stearns County. He lived on a farm on the Sauk River, now occupied by Jacob Lahr."

Mr. Mitchell includes an interesting account of the origin of the name Sauk. The Sauk is the principal in-

land river in the county and originates in Lake Osakis. This seemed very puzzling to him since the Osakis or Sac Indian tribe never dwelt within two hundred miles of Stearns County. Then he found a paper on this subject presented to the Stearns County Old Settlers Association by Judge L. W. Collins in 1897. The following is a quote from that paper.

"Among the Sioux the tradition is that both river and lake were called O-za-te, which in their language means the fork of a stream or road. Assisted by H. P. Beaulieu, one of the best Chippewa interpreters, I learned from Kay-zhe-aush, Key-she-by-aush and Zhe-bing-o-goon, patriarchs among the Leach Lake band, that the river was never known to the Chippewas by any other name than the O-zau-gee, while the lake was called O-zau-gee Lake. That country was still debatable territory and there were many conflicts between the Sioux and Chippewas. Five Sacs, refugees from their own tribe on account of murder which they had committed, made their way to the lake and settled near the outlet upon the east side. Three had wives of their own, but the other two took wives of the Fondulac band of Chippewas. The men were great hunters and traded at the post of the Northwestern Fur Company, located on the lower Leaf Lake, about six miles east of the eastern extremity of Otter Tail Lake. This post was visited by bands of Sioux and Chippewas, and the Sac Indians were known to the Chippewas as O-zau-kees."

Another tribe of the Siouan stock was introduced into the territory of Stearns by the white man - the Winnebagoes. This once powerful Wisconsin tribe had for some years been knocked from pillar to post by treaties and sale of land to the Federal government. In 1846 they were induced to accept a reservation of 800,000 acres in Minnesota west of the Mississippi between the Long Prairie and Watab

rivers. Hence this reservation covered a considerable part of northern Stearns. With a great deal of trouble the tribe was finally removed to the reservation in the summer of 1848. This lasted only a few years as Indi-

ans and whites alike seemed to conspire to antagonize the Winnebagoes against their new home. In 1855 they were moved to a new reservation in southern Minnesota.

Donna Rajkowski  
Donna Rajkowski,  
Town Historian

Maureen Beuning  
Maureen Beuning,  
Town Historian

The LeSauk Town Board would like to express its thanks to the members of the Bi-Centennial Committee and all who have made this celebration successful:

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Rajkowski (Chairpersons)  
Mr. and Mrs. Ervin Gelle  
Mr. and Mrs. Benedict Bronder  
Mr. and Mrs. Roger Nierengarten  
Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Traut (4H leader)  
Mr. and Mrs. Pete Pikus (4H leader)  
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Traut  
Mr. and Mrs. Anton Traut  
Mr. and Mrs. John Heim  
Mr. and Mrs. Pete Fasen  
Members of the LeSauk Township 4-H Club  
Mrs. John Beuning

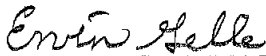
As recorded in the Bi-Centennial History, the records from the very beginning of the township were destroyed by fire. The earliest official written records begin with the date of December 19, 1888, and continue down to the date of this writing of a brief history in June, 1976. For a while, even these records beginning in the year 1888 were not available. Joseph Sartell, Town Clerk, was killed in December, 1935, by a railroad train passing through Sartell, and he was the only person who knew how to open the official safe.

In 1967, when Ervin Gelle was elected Town Clerk, he was able to locate a gentlemen who could open safes. He gave the combination to the Clerk, and thus enabled the Town Board to again have access to these early records.

Because of the beauty of the script, and the profoundness of the tributes to our Founding Fathers, a copy of a few of the Memorial Pages written down from those early days are included.

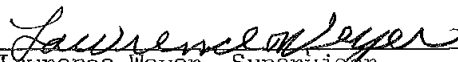
A guest book will be provided for all who attend this celebration to sign. This will be kept for future generations as a memento of this official celebration this 1st day of July, 1976, at the LeSauk Town Hall.

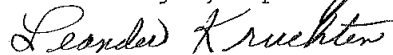
Given by my hand this 16th day of June, 1976 at LeSauk Township.

  
Ervin Gelle, Town Clerk

BY ORDER OF LeSAUK TOWN BOARD:

  
Wilfred Traut, Chairman

  
Lawrence Weyer, Supervisor

  
Leander Kruchten, Supervisor



## Memorial Resolutions

Le Sauk Minn

Mar 11, 1900

Whereas in the closing days of the Nineteenth Century Feb 10, 1900. The Grand Leveler of human greatness has seen fit to remove from this imperfect to that all perfect glorious celestial land above a loving husband, a kind father & an honest citizen in the name of the late John Dehler, whose death brought profound regret and sorrow to the citizen of this town and adjoining country.

And whereas born as he was in the Fatherland eighty six years ago Nov 12, 1899 and coming to America at the age of 24, he settled in Penn. engaging in the laborious work of extricating the black giant (coal) from the bowels of Mother earth, Here he was united in marriage to Miss Victoria Libach; several years later they moved to Sauk Rapids Benton Co, and in 1868 they settled in the town of Le Sauk on what is known as the Dehler Farm where they lived devoted Christian lives; his partner in life preceding him to the great unknown nearly eight years ago. Eleven children graced this union while their descendants number nearly one hundred,

Now therefore be it resolved, in view of the fact that he gave up home and friends and Native land to protection under our starry flag, to seek treasure with his brother pioneers in subduing the fertile valley of Le Sauk into the golden grain fields and to seek justice under our municipal

laws which pages would be honored by his name, That we as citizens of the town of Le Sauk in Annual Town meeting assambled ever mindful of the shortness of human life, and the uncertainty of its continuance join with his immediate relatives and friends in the sad hour of their bereavement and endeavor like him whose verdant covering is famed by the gentle breeze of Springtime, to do right because it is right, to do right and thus live respected and die regretted, and be it further resolved that a copy of these resolutions be incorporated on the town records in the usual form.

Drawn by Fred Sartell

Excepted ; adopted and ordered to be on Record.

Page 1 (P) Memorial Page  
Pioneer Resolutions

Mar # 12 1845

Whereas it has pleased the Powers  
of Heaven and Earth to take from our midst  
a kind Father a True Christian and an  
honored Citizen in the name of the  
late Peter Lund whose name was  
identical with the formation of this  
Township, and whose signature  
has honor to our Records You many  
a Page

And Whereas it has pleased the same omniscient  
Power to also translate from this imperfect  
to that all Perfect Glorious Celestial land  
above a kind Father a true Christian  
and an honored Citizen in the name  
of the late Peter Felschweiler  
whose name was also identical with  
the formation of this Town and who  
like his Brother Christian lived  
respected & died Requested by his  
fellow men,

And whereas they gone up home & friends  
and native land to become with their  
Francis Pioneers in subduing the fertile  
Soil of our own Dear Aquivera and  
transferring it in to the cold grain fields  
of harvest time and whereas they ever ever  
ready to serve their fellow men and as  
officers of this town served honorable & well  
therefore be it resolved that a Memorial Page  
be set apart in the Town Records for the suitable  
Resolutions to be written in by the Town Clerk as  
a last token of our respect and esteem of their Services  
to us as Citizens while on Earth  
as ordered by Council M. Sartell