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Otter Tail County

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STORY & PHOTOS BY JERRY BEGLEY

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OTC

Otter Tail County

Spring 2020



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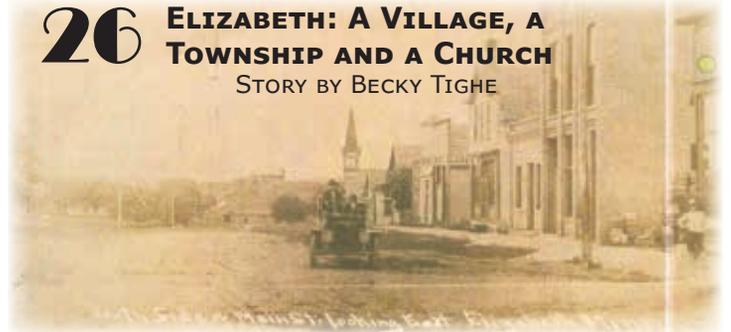


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Otter Tales

Spring is almost here ... I hope. This winter was not too bad compared to the last few. More snow early, but we didn't experience those long periods of cold. It will be 38 degrees as I write this on February 22, 2020. No complaints here except for a lousy ice fishing year.

Well, Boomer is all grown up now at 15 months ... maybe he'll put on a few more pounds, but done on height. He turned out bigger than expected. The breeder estimated him to go 50 pounds – he is currently at 64, and I think he will finish around 70. He loves everything outdoors. Rolling in the snow seems to be one of his favorites. He always has to be on the four wheeler when plowing the driveway and on the snowmobile when I take a short drive. As you can see by his picture, if he had opposable thumbs, he would be driving by now.

He did pretty well hunting last year on the few trips we made. He already has that look he gives me when I miss everything I am shooting at.

If he could talk, I'm sure the comment would be something like, "Really...you missed...again?" Of course, that is a much nicer comment than my hunting buddies have given me. Bottom line ... it is nice to have a hunting dog around again.

This spring issue of *OTC Magazine* is a good one. Another round of stories about great people and places. Being a snowmobiler, I appreciate the many volunteers who keep the trails nice and smooth for us to enjoy the ride. Without them, the potholes and washboard trails would make for a long day ... not to mention feeling it for several days after. Jerry Begley takes us for a look at one group that works year round to keep trails opened and groomed ... Thank You!

Jerry also introduces us to the unusual craft of repairing organs found in some churches here in Otter Tail County. To hear one of these organs play is amazing ... I hope this won't be a lost art someday. Pam Larson takes us for a tour of lighthouses in New England rich with the history of our nation. If you are like me and don't go on many trips, it seems like a nice vacation just seeing all her great photos.

Becky Tighe is always hunting down history of the small towns and townships in Otter Tail County. Her historical piece on Elizabeth is a good one and lived up to the hunt as well. Sandy Thimgan gets us ready for St Patrick's Day with her recipe on Irish Soda bread ... makes for a great hangover treat as well. Enjoy your spring!

— Ed Pawlenty, *OTC* Publisher



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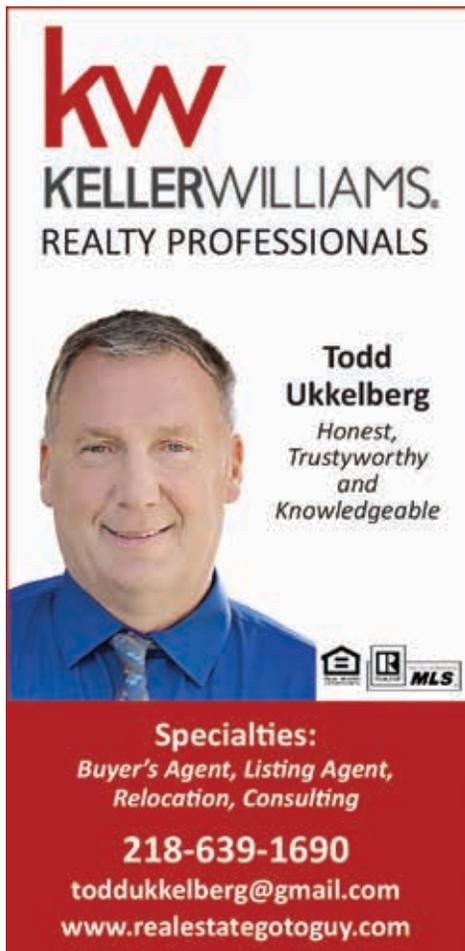
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Luther "Si" Melby: MASTER of the King of Instruments

STORY & PHOTOS BY JERRY BEGLEY

Luther playing 1911 Lyon & Healy Reed Organ

Luther "Si" Melby has brought 35 organs back to life, allowing congregations and groups to enjoy the sounds of an authentically refurbished and tuned organ.

Luther's father influenced his love of organ music and he became interested in the organ's combination of mechanics and sound. A classmate, Lance Johnson, owner of Fargo's Johnson Organ Company, encouraged Luther to try the refurbishing process and he now restores, installs, tunes and repairs units for churches and organizations. His work is documented with the *Organ Historical Society Pipe Organ Database*.

Learning to restore old organs has a steep learning curve and reference manuals are scarce. Luther can relate many surprises encountered just removing the organ from its current location, disassembling, rebuilding parts and re-installing in new location. Social media is a valued resource in connecting restorers for parts and advice, as the Society's *Facebook* page has over 1,500 contributors and advisors. Luther can still obtain some information from public libraries and let his secret slip that sometimes he pencils in comments to library books, such as "don't do it this way" or "this will not work."



Homemade "hide" glue heating pot

Restoring older units requires techniques used by the original craftsmen. Luther uses only "hide" glue that is heated in a device he made. Pipe organ air pressure is set by column inches of liquid measured by a manometer, and Luther has made his own. The reverse is true for reed organs that produce sound by creating a vacuum to draw air through reeds, which Luther informs is the same principle used by an accordion. His shop is loaded with instruments in progress and spare parts acquired from used equipment.

Restoration of an 1860 reed (pump) organ from South Dakota was his first project. Otter Tail County restorations and installations include a 1926 *Moller* in Zion-Sarpsborg Church (Dalton), a 1925 *Kilgen* in Kvam Church (rural Dalton), and a 1929 *Kilgen* in Battle Lake First Lutheran. The *Headquarters for Association of Free Lutheran*, (Plymouth, MN), received a 1965 *Wicks* organ. Zion-Sarpsborg also has a 1911 *Lyon and Healy* chapel-style reed

organ that played in the original church, traveled through several owners, was rescued and restored by Luther, and is back in use at the church.

Creative craftsmen can make modifications or additions to their work, and Luther beams with pride when describing one-of-a-kind enhancements to First Lutheran's 1929 *Kilgen*. One set of pipes has a "Trumpet Angel" that proudly raises her trumpet when the organ plays trumpet music. Of course, she is activated by a separate bellows – nothing digital there. Pipes on the other side have a "Bell Tower" that provides a beautiful tinkle composition when air pressure spins a fan with attached weights that strike the individual bells.

Actively involved in the historical efforts of the *Lake Region Pioneer Threshing Association*, he volunteers in a town hall full of used instruments awaiting work. His current project is installing a pipe organ there. Restoration is a time-consuming process and can take up to six months per organ. Luther's favorite scheduled deadline is one that will be done by Christmas, but he won't say what Christmas.

Next time you have the pleasure of hearing organ music, check out all the pipes and see if you can take a peek at the apparatus behind the wall. Imagine removing all of the pipes and other components, restoring them, building a new structure in which to install them and then re-tune the organ – only then can you fully appreciate Luther's dedication to the King of Instruments.

1929 Kilgen Console in First Lutheran



Bellows from reed organ



Above: Wooden Pipes waiting for a new home



Brass reeds from reed organ



Wood pipes (above) and wiring panel (below) in Zion-Sarpsborg



Below: 1926 Moller Console in Zion-Sarpsborg church





First Lutheran pipes weighing over 700 pounds

Luther's skill extends to the world of hot rods and antique cars. He built his original hot rod in 1961 and updated it 25 years ago. It took Luther and wife Deloris to the East Coast in 1996 and to the West Coast in 1998. His shop also has three other antique cars in various stages of restoration, but still scheduled for completion by Christmas.



1961 Coast to Coast Hot Rod



Reed Organs awaiting restoration in LRPTA Town Hall



Jerry Begley is a retired Regional Director for a telecommunications company. He resides with his wife Diane on Stalker Lake and enjoys all outdoor activities.



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Travel Destination:

New England:

Lighthouses & Other Maritime Sights

STORY & PHOTOS BY PAM LARSON

Portland Head Light, built in 1791, was commissioned by George Washington, dedicated by the Marquis de Lafayette and is New Hampshire's oldest lighthouse. The light station is automated with the tower, beacon and foghorn maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard. The former lighthouse keepers' house is a maritime museum within Fort Williams Park. This lovely lighthouse is one of my favorites.

A trip to New England is rich in the history of the U.S. It is the oldest clearly defined area of the United States, predating the American Revolution by more than 150 years. The English Pilgrims were Puritans escaping religious oppression in England. They established the Plymouth Colony in 1620, the first colony in New England and the second in America. Increasing population furthered farming, fishing, lumbering, whaling and sea trading in the region.

Paralleling that story is the emergence of lighthouses to mark hazards and harbors for those seeking the safety of the shore. The first official record of a lighted beacon was a small stone tower built at Nantasket (now Hull), Massachusetts, in 1673. Crucial improvements followed and many of those early lighthouses can be seen today. America has roughly 1,000 lighthouses, and about 150 of those are on the rocky shores of the Northeast. We began our explorations in Massachusetts.

The **Cape Cod National Seashore**, created by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, is 40 miles of sandy beaches, marshes, ponds and uplands that support many different plant and animal species. Lighthouses, cultural landscapes and wild cranberry bogs offer a glimpse of Cape Cod's past and present.

Coast Guard Stations became important facilities as

people populated the area. The **Eastham Life-saving Station** was one of the first in the area. The original building was replaced in 1937 by the present structure, which was an active Coast Guard Station until 1958. It currently serves as a residential environmental education program facility.



The **Nauset Beach Lighthouse** at Eastham MA may look familiar because it appears on some bags of Cape Cod Potato Chips™. Because of erosion, this 1887 structure has been moved over 330 feet inland from the original location. It was also in this area that the last section of the

Transatlantic Cable arrived in the U.S. from France in 1879.



Highland Light Station was commissioned by George Washington and established in 1797 as the 20th light station in the United States.

Erosion of the steep cliff at the original location brought the present light station around 100 feet from the cliff's edge by the early 1990s, so this structure was moved to safer ground in 1996, where it remains an active aid to navigation.

Race Point Light is located at the bend of Cape Cod and has been a landmark and reference point for sailors and travelers for over a century. Accessible by foot, or by a four-wheel drive vehicle authorized with a National Park Service Over-sand Permit, this lighthouse is available as a vacation rental. The movie *The Lightkeepers* was filmed at this location.



Eastham Windmill was built by Thomas Paine at Plymouth in 1680, was moved to Truro and then to Eastham, MA, in 1793. It is the oldest windmill on Cape Cod and one of the oldest in the country.



Chatham Light is the location of the thrilling rescue of the crew from the tanker *Pendleton*, which had shipwrecked during a violent nor'easter storm. The Coast Guard team of four brought back 32 survivors in a boat made for 16. This outstanding event was made into a 2016 movie, *The Finest Hours*. A display commemorating the occasion includes the original propeller from *Motor Lifeboat CG 36500*.



Nobska Light at Woods Hole, MA, established in 1826, had the tower protruding above the keeper's house. That tower was replaced with a 42-foot tall iron tower that is still an active aid to navigation.



Point Judith Lighthouse, built in 1857, has watched over the western entrance to Narragansett Bay, one of the most treacherous spots to navigate in all of New England. The light is on a point that protrudes over a mile into the Atlantic Ocean. As an active aid to navigation, *Point Judith Coast Guard Station* maintains the lighthouse. The coastguardsmen serve in search and rescue operations and law enforcement.



We took a ferry out to see the charming **Block Island Southeast Lighthouse**. The nautical



feel of the island is felt in many places, such as the anchor/cross atop a church we passed on our hike to the light. The fixed white light in the tower, often mistaken by mariners as a mast light or a light from a nearby town, was changed to a green flashing light in 1929.

The original purpose of the first **Watch Hill Lighthouse** in the 1740s was to warn local residents of a naval attack. The watchtower continued to be used during the French and Indian Wars to track French pirates who were harassing local fishermen and merchant ships. This tower was destroyed during a storm in 1781. The current tower beacon was automated in 1986. Two apartments in the keeper's dwelling are rental units, and tenants help protect the property from vandalism.



Boston is considered the birthplace of the American Revolution because so many momentous events took place there, and its historic sites span nearly four centuries of history. Our bus tour of Boston touched a few of these famous sites.

General George Washington used the **Longfellow House** as headquarters from 1775-1776. The building was the home of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow from 1837-1882. As with



Cape Neddick "Nubble" Light

many homes in the area, there were lovely gardens on the property.



The Freedom Trail, established in 1951, is a 2.5-mile-long path through downtown Boston that passes by 16 locations significant to the history of the U.S., including *Boston Common*, *The Old North Church*, *USS Constitution*, *Bunker Hill* and the statue of *Paul Revere* (right).

USS Constitution, launched in 1797 (aka *Old Ironsides*), is a wood-hulled, three-masted heavy frigate of the U.S. Navy. She is the world's oldest commissioned naval vessel still afloat. The nickname was earned during the War of 1812 while in combat with a British ship. The vessels were barely 50 yards apart and yet the



enemy cannon balls bounced off the Constitution's tough sides, which were 24-inch triple layers of white oak and live oak sheathed in copper forged by Paul Revere. One sailor in the battle supposedly yelled out, "Huzza! Her sides are made of iron!"

Scituate Lighthouse in Massachusetts has an intriguing story: *The American Lighthouse Army of Two*. In September 1814, lightkeeper Simeon Bates' two daughters were alone with their mother at the lighthouse. The British anchored a warship in the harbor, intending to raid the town. Rebecca (21) and Abigail (17) knew there was no time to warn the townspeople, so they took a fife and drum from the station, beginning to play and march behind the bushes. The soldiers assumed it was the approach of the town militia and made a hasty retreat.

New Hampshire only has 18 miles of coast, but it still has some nice lighthouses. **Portsmouth Harbor Light** (upper right next page) is on the grounds of *Fort Constitution State Park*. To get to the park and light, we had to walk through an active military installation. Fort Constitution has guarded the entrance to



Portsmouth Harbor for nearly 400 years and may be the oldest continuously occupied military site in the United States. At the front gate, we followed a blue line to see the state park, historic fort and lighthouse.

Cape Neddick Light, "the Nubble" (upper left), off York Beach, Maine, might be the most recognized lighthouse in the universe. It joins 116 images of American significance aboard the *Voyager II* spacecraft in 1977 to show the inhabitants of distant planets the beauty of life on Earth.

Connecticut's **New London Ledge Light** looks more like a brick mansion that floated out to sea than a lighthouse – and that's not the only peculiar thing about this unusual structure. Built in 1909 on a manmade island at the mouth of the Thames River, the three-story, 11-room building modeled after the homes of two



wealthy locals is rumored to be New England's most haunted lighthouse.

The only submarine museum operated by the U.S. Navy is at Groton, CT. A primary exhibit is the **Nautilus**, which became the first commissioned nuclear-powered ship in the U.S. Navy in September 1954. One secret mission, *Operation Sunshine*, was to be the first ship to cross the North Pole – the mission was successfully completed in 1958. A tour of the sub revealed the cramped quarters the sailors endured.

Although the Pilgrims did not refer to a rock in any of their writings,

Plymouth Rock is the traditional site of disembarkation of William Bradford and the *Mayflower* Pilgrims who founded Plymouth Colony in December 1620. The rock has been damaged by being moved, dropped and chiseled by zealous tourists seeking a souvenir. What remains is displayed in a grand structure in Plymouth near a replica of the *Mayflower*.



The Nautilus



Larry inside the Nautilus



Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse

Plimoth Plantation (that's how they spell it) is a living museum dedicated to telling the history of Plymouth Colony from the perspective of both the Pilgrims and the native Wampanoag people.



*above: Plimoth Plantation
below: Wampanoag Village*



Since the ocean is such a prominent factor in the New England region, it seemed fitting that the final stop on our journey was in Massachusetts at **The New Bedford Whaling Museum.**

We were amazed at the tenacity and courage of the early sailors who took on huge whales with just a small boat and a harpoon. The beautiful scrimshaw carvings and shell art created by seamen in their free time were equally amazing.



Whaleship *William Tell* of New York by the pioneer scrimshaw artist Edward Bordett of Nantucket, second mate, circa 1830.



Even though the USA is a young country by the world's standard, it is enriching to discover stories and visit places that show life here in the past centuries. Maritime life and navigation is an important piece of that history.



Our travels have taken us to 242 lighthouses, 38 National Parks and 61 Minnesota State Parks. We look forward to many more adventures!



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The Lakeside Gourmet

BY SANDRA THIMGAN
PHOTO BY DAN THIMGAN

Irish Soda Bread

4 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for currants/
raisins
4 T. sugar
1 tsp. baking soda
1 ½ tsp. kosher salt
4 T. (½ stick) cold butter, cut into ½" cubes
1 ¾ cups cold buttermilk, shaken
1 extra-large egg
1 tsp. grated orange zest
1 cup dried currants (or raisins, chopped)

Preheat the oven to 375°. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper.

Combine the flour, sugar, baking soda, and salt in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Add the butter and mix on low speed until the butter is mixed into the flour.

With a fork, lightly beat the buttermilk, egg, and orange zest together in a measuring cup. With the mixer on low speed, slowly add the buttermilk mixture to the flour mixture. Combine the currants/raisins with 1 tablespoon of flour and mix into the dough. It will be wet.

Dump the dough onto a well-floured board and knead it a few times into a round loaf. Place the loaf on the prepared sheet pan and lightly cut an X into the top of the bread with a serrated knife. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes, or until a cake tester comes out clean. When you tap the loaf, it will have a hollow sound. Cool on a baking rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.

No corned beef? Not a fan of corned beef? Try these: Eat warm from the oven with butter and jam, toast it for breakfast or ... Irish Soda Bread French Toast! Oh, yes! Mix eggs/milk together, soak the ¾" slices in this mixture, and fry in a skillet. Serve with whipped butter, maple syrup and a dusting of powdered sugar.

Sláinte mahith! (slan-cha vah) — good health!

Toasting St. Patrick's Day with Irish Soda Bread!

St. Patrick's Day — ah, the smell of corned beef wafting through your kitchen! But, all those leftovers???? The dense, moist texture of this bread will raise your corned beef sandwich to new heights. This sweeter, richer version is a quick bread, so no kneading/rising/fear of bread making! After the bread is cool, toast it, add Swiss cheese slices and sliced corned beef — maybe a little sauerkraut on the side... St. Patrick is smiling down from heaven!



OTC
The Old Country

There is no Irish blood in either of our families, but I love an easy, tight-textured bread that has multiple uses. Easy to make is a bonus. Enjoy! Sandra Thimgan lives on Silver Lake with her husband/photographer/taster, Dan.



HAPPY TRAILS!

STORY & PHOTOS BY JERRY BEGLEY



Veteran groomer operator Charles Holte demonstrates the mighty SNO BOSS in action, pulled by the New Holland Tractor. (Note branch deflector mounted to front and top of tractor.)

The Dalton Snow Thrashers Snowmobile Club prides itself on providing grassroots support for snowmobiling in Otter Tail County. They feel one of their most important duties is maintaining their portion of trails for the Otter Country Trail Association (OCTA).

Six club members serve as operators of the OCTA snow trail grooming machines. This requires a minimum of two 12-hour shifts to maintain their portion of the trail, which starts in Fergus Falls and meanders north and east through Battle Lake, Underwood, Clitherall, Vining and Dalton, ending back in Fergus Falls. This has been a challenging winter due to the high water levels and heavy

snow. However, the machines never get stuck – just temporarily delayed. OCTA maintains three grooming machines stored in Fergus Falls. The other two machines serve the northern portion of the county, maintaining a total of 364 miles.

Experience has determined that an agricultural tractor with a track system will adequately pull the **SNO BOSS** trail groomer, which weighs 4,500 pounds. OCTA recently purchased a trail packer – consisting of an eight-foot roller to compact the trail – and are waiting for proper snow conditions to use it. Trail maintenance starts in the fall after deer hunting, when club members clear brush, fallen trees and low hanging branches,



maintain trail signs, and get the trail ready for snow. Weather permitting, the trails are open from December 1 through March 31.

Otter Country trails consist of public right-of-way use and private areas generously allowed by property owners. OCTA thanks the private landowners by hosting a "Landowners Banquet" each Spring.

OCTA trails are part of a larger statewide system, with Minnesota offering 22,000 miles, in addition to the multi-state Corridor System. OCTA started grooming trails in the late 1970s, and the Dalton club formed in 1989. The Minnesota Legislature and the Department of Natural Resources

financially assist trail maintenance, allotting "Grant-In-Aid" dollars through the Minnesota Snowmobile Trails Assistance Program for 2020. The trail system provides scenic recreational advantages, but also reduces trespass and crop damage issues.

In addition to their community service, the 40-member Snow Thrashers organize formal rides and activities to socialize with fellow snowmobile enthusiasts. They have monthly meetings from October through March on the third Friday and want to welcome anyone interested to join them.

Look for **Dalton Snow Thrashers** on Facebook for updates.



Snow Thrashers monthly meeting

OCTA LOGO



left: Charles Holte, volunteer trail groomer

right: Shovel mounted on tractor cab - "Just in Case"



Before grooming



After grooming



Added weights on tractor front for better traction



Jerry Begley is a retired Regional Director for a telecommunications company. He resides with his wife Diane on Stalker Lake and enjoys all outdoor activities.





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Are You Thinking About Hip Replacement?

5 Frequently Asked Questions About The Anterior Hip Approach

BY DR. CHRISTOPHER ROTT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DR. ROTT & LRHC

For most people, the decision to have hip replacement surgery comes after they've experienced some sort of hip pain that has worsened over time. Most hip problems start as minor discomfort and progress to the point where hip pain impairs the ability to enjoy activities, hobbies or even accomplish daily routines. Initially, hip pain is treated without surgery. However, when pain gets to the point where hip surgery is the best option, which type of hip surgery is best?

Three Approaches to Hip Replacement:

1. Posterior approach – replacing the hip from the back of the joint.
2. Lateral or anterolateral approach – replacing the hip from the side of the joint.
3. Anterior approach – replacing the hip from the front of the joint.

Anterior Hip Replacement: The most minimally invasive approach

Anterior hip replacement is quickly becoming the preferred approach to hip replacement because it provides many advantages, some of which include faster recovery, less postoperative pain and a lower risk of dislocation.

Frequently asked questions about anterior hip replacement:

1. How is the anterior approach different from other hip replacements?

The anterior approach is considered minimally invasive because there is a small three- to four-inch made. This approach also allows a surgeon to work between the muscles, so there is minimal or no muscle cutting. A more traditional hip replacement approach requires a surgeon to make a larger incision and to cut muscles and other soft tissue to access the hip joint.

2. What are the advantages to having an anterior hip replacement?

- Precision fit – an x-ray machine is used during anterior hip replacement surgery to aid in the precise placement of the implants. This also makes it possible to check leg lengths and to make small adjustments during surgery. This is often not the case during traditional hip replacement surgery, where an x-ray is taken after surgery when it is too late to make corrections.
- Less pain and faster recovery – because less muscle and tissue is cut or disturbed during surgery, patients typically experience less pain after surgery, require less pain medication and recover faster.
- Better range of motion – after most traditional hip surgeries, patients must avoid bending at the hip or doing anything that rotates the hip for up to six to eight weeks. The anterior approach allows patients to bend and rotate at the hip without worry.
- Decreased risk of hip dislocation – one of the major concerns for most hip replacement patients is that their new hip ball and socket will dislocate. Because the anterior hip replacement approach does not disturb the muscles and tissue structures that naturally prevent the hip from dislocating, there is a decreased risk of hip dislocation.
- Shorter hospital stay – most patients who undergo anterior hip replacement have a shorter hospital stay; however, this depends on the patient.



Fergus Falls resident, Terry Randall, plays with her grandchildren after having anterior hip surgery.

3. What are the risks associated with anterior hip replacement?

- It is a technically demanding surgery – the anterior incision provides a restricted view of the hip joint, making it a demanding procedure. The skill of the surgeon, the surgical team and the postoperative team significantly impacts outcomes.
- Anterior hip replacement is not suitable for everyone – it is advised that you discuss surgery options with your surgeon. Anterior hip replacement isn't recommended if you have had a traditional hip replacement and need hip revision surgery on that hip. If you've had a traditional hip replacement on one hip and would like to have an anterior hip replacement on the other hip, that may be possible.

4. How long does the surgery take?

Surgery usually averages about one hour, although it may be longer or shorter depending on the individual. Most people are in the operating room for about two hours, with the extra time being necessary for preparation.

5. How long do the implants last?

The quality of materials used for hip replacement components has improved greatly over

the years. During the anterior approach, standard implants with proven track records are used. Recent studies show that hip replacements can last more than 20 years.* Longevity depends upon an individual's age, level of activity and weight. (*[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31665-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31665-9/fulltext))

How to Know If It's Time for Hip Replacement Surgery

Many people who have had hip replacement surgery say that they wish they would have had it done sooner. Here's how to tell that it's time to see your doctor or specialist to talk about surgery:

- You've tried remedies such as pain medication, anti-inflammatory drugs or shots, physical therapy, exercise or weight loss, and they haven't given you enough relief.
- It's hard or painful to walk, stand, sit, bend or climb stairs.
- Your hip hurts when you're not moving.



Dr. Christopher Rott, DO, has provided orthopedic and sports medicine care at Lake Region Healthcare since 2013. He is married with three boys and loves water sports, gardening and biking.



Elizabeth

A township, a village and a church

STORY BY BECKY TIGHE
PHOTO CREDITS: SEE PAGE 29



Aerial view of Elizabeth, Minnesota, looking south

1868: "Nigglersville" Gets Its First Settlers

"Otter Tail County was remote and among the last sections of Minnesota to find willing settlers.... The Elizabeth settlers from Osseo, near Minneapolis, blazed a foot trail into northwestern Otter Tail County.... Mathias Halverson was the first to arrive in 1868, and Rudolph Niggler about ½ month later."

Having staked and protected claims, they wintered in Osseo, then returned the following spring with their families, bringing three Niggler sons-in-law: Jacob Chafee, and Edward and Herman Burau. In addition, three "Zimmerman brothers" and Misters Candaux, Thede and Erhard came. They all broke sod and built houses. All but two followed the pattern of wintering in Osseo, returning in spring with their families.

Niggler's Town becomes "Elizabeth"

Rudolf is remembered as a pioneer merchant and first postmaster in Niggler's Town or "Nigglerville." The township was organized on Sept. 5, 1870. What now is known as "the railway village" was platted in 1872 and incorporated Nov. 21, 1884. From 1871 to 1882, the village had a station of the Northern Pacific Railroad.

Rudolf's wife Elizabeth died in childbirth in 1876, after which Rudolf renamed the post office, town and township Elizabethtown in her memory. He later shortened it to simply "Elizabeth." By that time, Catholic missionaries (called "black robes" by local Indians) had planted the Sacred Heart Catholic church in Elizabeth. Though Elizabeth and her family had belonged to St. John's Lutheran Church, the church's history (published in 2000) records that Sacred Heart showed its love and respect for her by renaming itself St. Elizabeth's in her memory.

Niggler info above and photo at left from *Celebrating Our Journey of Faith*, courtesy Fr. Jeff Ethen, St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church.



*The Niggler family: front: adopted daughter, name unknown
2nd row: Rudolph, Adolph, wife Elizabeth, and Wilhelmina
3rd row: Mary Ann, Maria and Rose*



Aerial view of Elizabeth, Minnesota, looking west

John Mason's Comments About Elizabeth Town and Township

John Wintermute Mason (1846-1927)

was born in LaPeer, Michigan, on August 6, 1846. He married Miss Fannie Safford on June 9, 1875, and they settled in Fergus Falls. Mason was a successful railroad lawyer at Great Northern (1883-1910). He partnered with a series of lawyers until 1910. The first mayor of Fergus Falls (1881), Mason was also the first president of the city's board of education, and a state legislator. He was a popular speaker. Mason's *History of Otter Tail County*, published in 1916, is in two volumes that total approximately 1,500 pages. He was buried beside his wife in Mount Faith Cemetery, Fergus Falls. They had no children.



Attorney John W. Mason



Mason built this classic two-story Italianate-style home in Fergus Falls in 1882

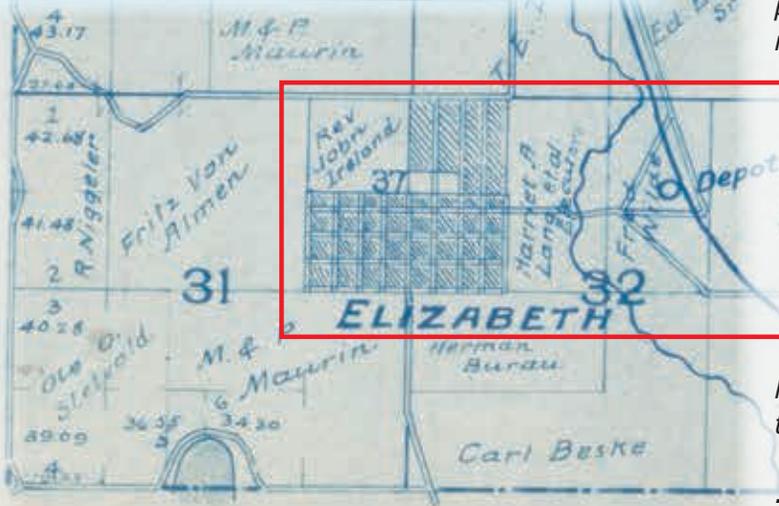
The following is taken from John W. Mason's *History of Ottertail County*, pp. 180-183.

... The (township) petition ... [was signed by] Rudolph Niggler, Lorenzo B. Peirce, Alson A. Peirce, E.A. Evans, John Grows, Charles D. Keck, G. Spindler, Edward Burau, Louis Candaux, Carl Gustav Wagner, Rugler Zimmerman, August Burau, Jacob Frey, Thomas White, Herman Zimmerman, Henry Teuss, Peter Knold, Alex E. Erhard, Adolph Niggler and Erwin W. Sims.

... Pelican river valley was one of the first sections in the country to be settled.... No better farming land is to be found than lies in this township.... The whole township drains into the Pelican river, which runs south through the township.

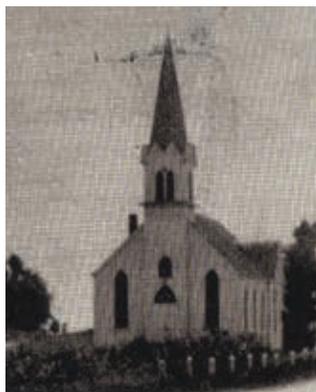
... The Pelican Rapids branch of the Northern Pacific passes through the township from north to south and affords easy communication with the outside world ... [it] has had two railroads ... one had only a brief career. The Great Northern built a branch from the village of Carlisle to Elizabeth and paralleled the Northern Pacific ... [but] ... disposed of its right of way ... now used in places as a highway. The only village of any importance is Elizabeth. [It] was platted in 1872 for Herman and Marie Burau ... recorded September 19, 1872 (and) ... granted the right of incorporation ... on November 21, 1884.... Elizabeth has all of the various business enterprises usually found in good rural villages, and boasts of general stores, an implement dealer, creamery, blacksmith shop, confectionery store, lumber yard, elevator, flour-mill, bank ... A large amount of livestock is marketed here and thousands of bushels of small grain are handled annually by the Maurin elevator and the Pelican River flour-mills.

... Religious life ... is well taken-care of by ... St. Elizabeth's Catholic ... Swedish Lutheran [Augustana. est. 1877] and St. John's German



Evangelical Lutheran (est. 1886) churches 1886. All three have flourishing congregations, excellent church buildings and parsonages. The [St. John's] ... has a good parochial school building. The two-story brick public school building was erected in 1905.

Village officials are ... President, Henry F. Maurin; councilmen, Frank Grouws, A. Marquard and Fred Wilde, Sr.; clerk, J.C. Rian; treasurer, Fred Wilde, Jr.; assessor, C.S. Bell; justices, C.S. Bell and L.D. Barcalow; constables, Fred Wilde, Jr., and Walter Wilde.



left: St. John's Lutheran Church, built circa 1892

below: St. John's today



Merchant's State Bank



St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church

below: This dam on the east side of Elizabeth is one of several built by European settlers to harness the rivers' energy



The following is taken from "Reminiscences of Otter Tail County, 1869-1872" in John W. Mason's *History of Ottertail County*, pp. 550-551.

GRASSHOPPER SWARM destroys crops in a day (1872) by Ole Jorgens (auditor)

There are many people now living who ... [recall] ... when it seemed that the grasshoppers would cause a depopulation of the county. As I am writing there comes to my mind an experience I had with these ravagers of the seventies, which might be interesting to generations yet unborn.

On one of my trips down the Pelican valley I passed through the village of Elizabeth, or, as we usually called it in those days, Niggler's town. I noticed as I drove along the path up the valley how strong fields of grain were all small, but they were very thrifty and were a delight to the eye. I rejoiced at the appearance of prosperity and the evidence of fertility of the land of Otter Tail County ... everything was marvelously beautiful. I wish to call especial attention to the luxuriance of all plant life in order to bring out the contrast which was to come a day later.

On my way back down the valley, I rode through Sletvold township ... Well, as I drove across the township something began to fall

from the sky on my pony, into my buggy and even right in my face ... it was not long before I found out that the precipitation was — the humble grasshopper.

It was my first experience with the grasshopper in swarms, for they literally did swarm up and down the [Pelican] valley. I soon noticed that they had begun their deadly work—the grain in the fields, the vegetation in the gardens, all things green along the road side showed the effects of their rapacious appetite.

The waving grain of the previous day was a grievous ruin, the gardens which the wives of the farmers had so carefully tended were now in ruin. Hardly a head of wheat was left on the stalk and the garden vegetables were not only gnawed off to the ground, but in many cases even the roots had disappeared. In the case of even onions the hoppers had not only eaten the stalks, but even the very root of the onion, so that nothing was left of it except a hole in the ground where it grew.

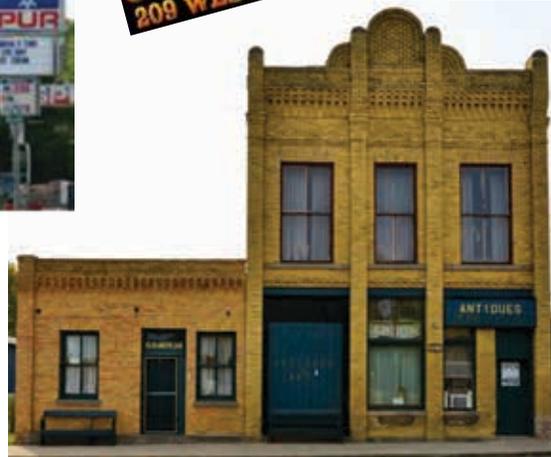


left: Augustana Lutheran Church (photo circa 1937)

below: Augustana today



above: Church interior showing earlier and later altars



A Simpler Time Antiques formerly Elizabeth Town Hall and Jail



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Churches:

- Augustana Swedish Lutheran Church
- St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church
- St. John's German Evangelical Lutheran Church

Acknowledgements:

John W. Mason History of Otter Tail County
 Celebrating Our Journey of Faith, (courtesy Fr. Jeff Ethen, St. Elizabeth's Church)
 LAKESNWOODS.COM City of Elizabeth Minnesota Community Guide
 Photos/history (courtesy Ethel Pederson, St. John's Lutheran Church)
 Photos/history (courtesy Pastor Kate Bruns, Augustana Lutheran Church)
 1902 plat courtesy East Otter Tail County Museum, Perham
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 Wikipedia.com
https://books.google.com/books/about/History_of_Otter_Tail_County_Minnesota.html



Becky Tighe left advertising to volunteer with Christian non-profit ministries in Romania and Austria for 7 years. Returning to Minnesota, she settled in Battle Lake. She likes spending time with her 10 grandkids and living among BL's wonderful people.



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