

The following was taken from the "The History of Norman County," Minnesota Centennial Edition 1958

History of Shelly

The first sign that there was to be a town at Shelly was in the fall of 1896. That was the year the Great Northern Railway was extended from Halstad to Crookston. The village and the township were both named for John Shelly, who settled here in 1870.

Some of the early business men were: Ostby and Johnson, who had hardware and implements; A. O. Anderson, general merchandise; Olson Bros., implements; Button Brothers and Moen, general merchandise; Jacob Wilson, hardware; O. S. Oberson, meat market; Ed. Nelson, shoe and harness shop; Charley Miller, hotel; Joe Johnson, soft drinks; Peter Peterson, harness and shoe shop; Charley Miller, hotel; Christ Hawkins, drug store.

In the fall of 1896 the bank at Caledonia, North Dakota, was moved to Shelly, and then known as "State Bank of Shelly." The first officers were John S. Tucker, president; E. N. Tucker, vice-president; J.W. G. Anderson, cashier.

On October 19, 1896, the Shelly post office was established. It was housed in the Button Bros. and Moen building, which was later known as the O.O. Odegaard store, and is now (1958), occupied by the Peterson Biddick Produce Co. Sven Moen was appointed postmaster November 5, 1896. Succeeding Sven, as postmaster was Peter Moen, who served from 1910 to June 1922 when he died. Henry Megrund was the next postmaster and served until October 31, 1955. The present postmaster is Manfred Folstad.

A livery barn was operated by Lovsness & Vigen. Horses were used for transportation. This changed hands several times; in the later years of its existence it used autos for transportation.

On July 29, 1902, Shelly was incorporated as a village. The president of the first council was T.S. Anderson. The Trustees were Sven Moen, P.O. Troseth, and L.M. Hanson. The Recorder was Peter Moen, Treasurer was J.W. G. Anderson and the Constable was Gust Borg. Ordinances were passed and bonds of officers were set. There were no modern improvements. The streets were lighted by kerosene lamps set on top of 10-foot poles, and there were wooden sidewalks. Today Shelly has all modern improvements, including a shelterbelt, which has received wide notice.

The first newspaper was the Shelly Signal established in 1898 by Matt Johnson and Peter Herbrandson. In 1909 it was sold to the Halstad Reporter.

In 1905 a disastrous fire destroyed about half of the business section. Sven Moen's grocery and post office, Aarestad Bros. furniture store, Hanson Bros. hardware, O.S. Oberson meat market, and the Efteland hotel all burned.

Some doctors of the past are: Cleveland, Schroeder, Budworth, Nelson, Juliar, Vistaunet, Bowman, Scodel. There is no doctor now.

An I.O.G.T. hall was located on the west side by a Good Templar Lodge. The Shelly Co-operative creamery was started in 1911. The first operator was Axel Davidson; the present one is Ingman Wollertson.

A church was built in 1912, then known as Shelly Norwegian Lutheran. The pastor was A. Megrund. It has been enlarged twice and is now known as the Shelly Congregation after the Marsh River church burned.

In 1917 the Farmers' State Bank was established. Its first officers were: G.O. Hage, president; P.M. Ringdal, vice-president; Tom Morken, cashier. The Farmers' State Bank was taken over by the State Bank of Shelly.

The following is taken from "This Is Our Story, Shelly, MN 1897-1997"

History of Shelly

The history of the town of Shelly begins with the coming of the railroad in 1896. On September 22, 1896, with the bridges completed, the Great Northern Company brought in the track-laying machine. This machine made it possible to lay the tracks quickly, at a rate of two miles per day. Anxiously, families watched as the tracks were laid. Within four days, Shelly had its new tracks of steel.

When the tracks were completed, railroad sidings or station stops were set up every six or seven miles. These sidings were places where the trains would stop to accommodate the needs of area farmers. When the track went through Section 18, a siding was posted. It was marked "Shelly," and spelled with a double "l" to distinguish it from the Shelly Township. An old boxcar was set up as a depot or a stopping place where farmers could bring produce and pick up supplies.

On Nov. 17, 1896, Enock Johnson (Efteland) and his wife, Helene, had their land on the west side of the railroad tracks platted into a townsite. The original townsite was on the west half of the southeast quarter of Section 18, Township 146, Range 48. Enock had the streets surveyed square with the section line. On December 29, 1897, Lars Mauritson and his wife, Lisabeth, platted their land on the east side of the railroad, the east half of the southeast quarter of Section 18. This became Mauritson's First Addition. Lars thought the streets should be surveyed square with the railroad tracks and because the railroad tracks ran in a northeasterly direction through Section 18, Shelly ended up with a crooked "Main Street."

As soon as the village was platted, townsite lots were being sold. The first building in Shelly was a general store built by Button Bros and Moen, west of the tracks. This general store housed the Shelly Post Office, which was established October 19, 1896. Asser Hoie's blacksmith shop and A. O. Anderson's general store had been operating south of the Mauritson's farm. These buildings were moved into the platted lots. The blacksmith shop was moved to the west side of the present day elevator. The store would be occupied by the hardware firm of Ostby and Johnson, and A. O. Anderson would build a new store. Other businesses followed in quick succession: William Cooper's Hotel and Restaurant, Shelly Elevator, Livestock and Lumber Company, Jacob Wilson's Hardware, a meat market operated by Efteland, Hoiland, and Redland and a livery stable run by Hetland, R. Vigen, and S. Lausness. During the winter months, some of the businesses changed hands. The meat market was sold to Oberson and Olson, the Efteland Hotel opened and G.F. Redland started a photography. Within the next few years, several more businesses were established: St. Anthony and Dakota Elevator, Northwestern Elevator, James T. Hansen Hardware, E. Dybing and E. Quarnstrom Meat Market, S.O. Stola Feed Mill and both Samuel Little and J.R. Haga opened general stores. Christian Larson became a constable and G. Orsland was a justice of the peace. Lots and businesses changed hands frequently as early settlers sought to find which business was best suited for them.

Walking down Main Street, there was no question about it –Shelly was not going to be just another passing settlement. The train whistles brought the Shelly businessmen and early residents to their door, as they waved to the train crew. Businesses, popping up over night, had hitching posts inviting everyone to stop by for a visit. It would not be long before wide wooden sidewalks lined the streets, with narrower ones stretching out into residential areas. Then the streets would soon be lighted by kerosene lights lit at dusk by a city lamplighter. For now, the streets left a little to be desired. After a rain, they became almost impassable with deep ruts.

Wagon wheels would sink deep as horses struggled to pull the wagons along, but friends and neighbors were always willing to help. They had known when they had immigrated here, that starting a new life in a new land was not going to be easy. They knew they would need to work hard, and along with their hard work, they had established Shelly. The Norwegians lovingly called it, "Okka By" (our town) –a small town with a big heart. Yes! Shelly was here to stay!