

MINNESOTA CENTENNIAL
FORT JUELSON

One of the almost forgotten, yet historical spots in Otter Tail County, is the place designated as Fort Juelson. In assembling the facts concerning this spot, I received my information from a letter written by Hans P. Bjorge, one time legislator from this area.

This Fort Juelson was erected during the Indian scare of 1876. Early one morning Julius Hankey, came on horseback and notified the people of Tordenskjold Township that the Indians were on the war path again.

Immediately some people packed up and left, never to return. The rest, hardy pioneers, decided to get some more information. Andrew and John Hoff went on horseback to Fergus Falls but returned being unable to get any reliable information.

The settlers met in Dolner's Store on Peter Juelson's farm in Tordenskjold Township and decided to build a fort for self protection.

Hans Juelson and Berge Lee, two Civil War veterans were selected to find a place and supervise the work. They chose a high point on a chain of hills in the southeast corner of the northwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 3 in Tordenskjold Township. This is not on Juelson's farm but was named after him.

The size of the fort was about 90 by 100 feet with sod walls two feet thick. At the southeast corner of the fort was a ravine running down the hillside where water was obtainable and could be carried up this ravine under cover of the guns of the fort.

Julius Hankey, who had a good team of horses did most of the plowing and everybody, men and women, piled the sod under the direction of Juelson and Lee.

The Indian scare soon died down, all went home at night but returned promptly every morning until the work was completed.

When the sod walls were finished some one suggested that they get Bjorge's bear gun and test the walls. This gun, made in Norway was powerful. The gun was obtained, the walls tried out and declared o. k.

Those taking active part in the building were: Hans Juelson, Berge O. Lee, F. Hankey, Julius Hankey, Knut Olson, Knut Pederson, Arne Pederson, Nils Pederson, P. M. Hendricks, Isaac Moe, Jack Moe, John Bjorge, Marcus Bjorge and Hans P. Bjorge.

Along the chain of hills from South Turtle Lake to what we called Harms Lake, probably German Lake, was an Indian trail. In the early days we could see the Indians with their conoes on their heads walking this trail. A space adjoining the fort on this trail had evidently been a burial ground for quite a few skeletons were uncovered in plowing the sod. These were all carefully reburied.

Where the fort was finished, the sod walls were pretty good, but the cattle running wild, soon started to destroy the sod walls. Some of the settlers erected a fence but that finally was carried away and destroyed.

To mark this historical spot, the Otter Tail County

Historical Society has erected a steel flag pole set in concrete from which a flag is flown on various holidays. This can be seen on the north side of the highway about one and one-half miles east of Underwood.

Mrs. R. R. Holland,
Custodian of the
Otter Tail County
Historical Museum,
Court House