

Research shows that ghost town of Lynn Was once a proud country community¹

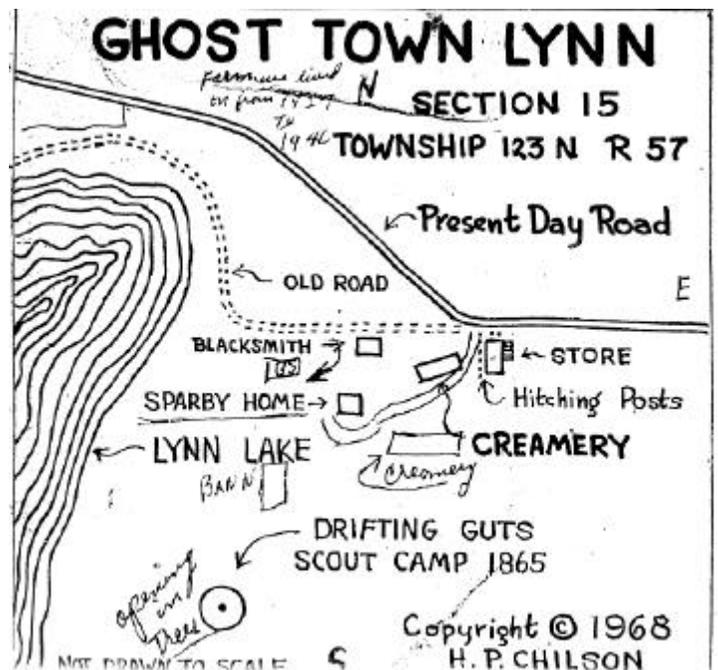
By Herman P. Chilson
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Lynn was located in Section 15, Township 123 North, Range 57 West, in Lynn Township. Today the site is owned by the State of South Dakota and administered by the South Dakota Parks Department. There is no semblance remaining of the once proud country town. The earthworks of Drifting Guts Scout Camp —(1865) is visible 45 rods southwest-from the buttermaker's house, which was last owned and lived in by the Oswald Sparbys.

Lynn is a pleasant sounding name It has always had a certain magnetic influence on me. I am drawn to the name because my great grandmother, grandmother, mother, uncles, aunts and cousins lived, in the Lynn Lake vicinity during its heyday. It is near Lynn Lake that my great grandmother lies in her prairie grave, the first victim of a prairie fire in Dakota.

As I write this history, I now realize, that it was begun some 50 years ago. I was drawn to the name early in life or my curiosity about this area was aroused as I listened to my grandmother and mother tell stories of the early days: stories of the Negro soldiers who camped at Lynn Lake in the mid 1880's, stories of the big Syttende Mal (Norwegian 4th of July) celebration, social and political gatherings.

The discovery in September 1963 of the site of Drifting Guts an important Indian Scout Camp whetted my appetite and stimulated my desire to learn more about this town. (See H P. Chilson, HISTORIC. ARMY SCOUT CAMP IN DAY COUNTY, Public Opinion 9-15-66, *Reporter and Farmer* 9-28-68.)



Lynn misnamed

The misnaming of Lynn by our early officials is perhaps the most curious thing of all. (See H. P. Chilson TOWNSHIP NAME ORIGIN STUDIED, *Reporter and Farmer*, July 7, 1965.) The feature story quotes Ochsenreiter's History of Day. County: "The honor of naming this township was given to Miss Julia Bakke, in honor of being the first woman homesteader in the township. Miss Bakke being a great admirer of Jenny Lynn (sic) the well-known singer, she named the township in her honor." Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, was a household word 80 years ago. It seems strange that this error in spelling should go unnoticed or uncorrected for 80 odd years. It seems incredible that a musician, a state or local historian; a grade or high school teacher did not detect and report this Error.

PO Opens In 1883

The with Elise M. Larson as postmistress. In 'the early days it was customary for post-offices to be located in farm homes. Day County had several farm postoffices, but as trading centers developed and rural routes came into being, these rural postoffices were closed. Rasmus Larson became postniaster May 31, 1888, but the postoffice was discontinued Nov. 21, 1888. It was reestablished Aug. 28, 1901 h when C. E. Blegen opened a store and was named postmaster. Joachim Siverston succeeded him March 7, 1907. The postoffice was turned over to Nels O. Monson Dec. 9, 1909 and it was discontinued Aug. 31, 1911. The honor of being postmaster was lessened by the very small revenue received. Compensation of small rural postmasters was based on a percentage of cancellations basis. This was on a sliding scale and varied from 50 per cent to -100 per cent depending on the volume of the postoffice.

In 1884 the service was also on a sliding scale with some towns receiving mail once a week, others twice, three times, and a favored few six time per week. There was also one classification called "Special Supply" and it was under this category that mail was delivered to Lynn. Jeff Nelson, Day County register of 'Deeds, informed me that there were no plats for a town-site but that the Lynn Lake Cooperative Creamery had platted lot one, containing two acres, in 1902.

Creamery established

Construction of the creamery was begun in the fall of 1900 or the spring of 1901, according to a news note in the *Reporter and Farmer* of March 28, 1901. "C. E. Blegen, who for 18 months was employed at the Chilson and Hanugen Store on Webster, is going to start a store, at Lynn Lake where, a large creamery is going up." The original creamery was 35 feet long by 20 feet wide.



At first a separate shack served as an ice house, but because it was not satisfactory, an addition, 20 feet by 20 feet, for ice storage was attached to the creamery itself making the building overall about 55 feet long by 20 feet wide. The accompanying picture shows clearly the addition was added to left side of the building. Elias Hope (Olga Hope's father) and Martin "McCarlson cut ice at Lynn Lake and packed it in the creamery building. Elias Hope lived in the old Betsy Dalager homestead. Bennie McCarlson says, "There were either two or three churns in the creamery. The first buttermaker was Helmer Olson and the second one was a Dane by the name of Bang. The house that the buttermaker lived in was Later owned by Oswald Sparbys." The creamery operated most of the time six days a week except in the winter. Notices in the "Lynn Echos" of the *Webster World* said, "Saturday is payday at the creamery. Come and get your check." Business evidently was thriving as the newspaper in 1904 congratulated the creamery on its new 35 foot smokestack. Ben McCarlson said the new smokestack was built of brick.

Butter hauling hard work

My Uncle Johannes McCarlson had the butter hauling contract at one time. His sons Martin and Bennie worked for the creamery and one of their duties was hauling butter to Bristol at night. Let Bennie McCarlson tell it In his own words: "We usually left at sundown with 20 to 22 tubs of I freshly churned butter and generally arrived at Bristol in three hours. We rode in an open wagon drawn by a team of horses. After unloading and driving back, we would get home in early morning. In the summer it was seldom we did not get soaked. How it could rain, rain, rain! In the winer many times a dirty storm would come from the Northwest. I never froze so much in my life. The roads in those days were bad, and we almost tipped over on the Lynn corner. " Mrs. Martin McCarlson (Minnie) said, "Six of us neighbors formed a group to take turns hauling milk to the creamery. We lived in the farthest east. Then came: Betsy Dalager, Nels Anderson, Pete Nelson, John Amundson and finally Elling Jensen. I got 10 cents when it was my turn to haul. I didn't always get the ten cents, but sometimes I did get paid.

Skim milk distributed

We stopped at the south door of the creamery. The picture shows five buggies and one wagon lined up on the south side to deliver the whole milk. Martin McCarlson is on the picture standing on the left. When the empty cans were returned, the creamery employees placed a lead V shaped bar on the top of your cream can. The size of this bar determined how much skim milk you received to take home. The size of the bars depended on the number of pounds of milk you had brought, Then you drove to the north door, pulled a lever on the machine, put your V shaped bar in the, slot and pushed it in. Then you received your skim milk. In the early days the skim milk was cold but in later years it was cooked and came back boiling hot. It could scald you if you were careless. You hauled home almost as much milk as you had taken to the creamery in the first place.” This creamery had steam facilities to clean cans and equipment, pretty much the same as the small town creameries of today. The early stockholders or patrons of this co-op had to take turns hauling coal for the creamery without pay.

The first recorded reference to a livery barn in Lynn appeared in the *Webster World* in November, 1903: “Buttermaker Olson intends to paint his livery barn in the near future.” Bennie McCarlson says, “There never was a livery barn at Lynn at anytime.” Evidentially the reporter was referring to the buttermaker’s own personal barn.

Merchandise store opens

C. E. Blegen started a general merchandise store in the spring of 1901. The postoffice was in the store at that time and the store building stood approximately 70 feet south of the edge of the present road. The store was northeast of the buttermaker’s house and it was divided into two rooms, the north one approximately 17 by 24 feet and the south room about 24 by 32 feet. There was a stairway to the upstairs on the east side of the building. The store had a ‘telephone long before the neighbors formed their own co-op and built their own line.

Mrs. McCarlson said, “We bought most of our groceries there. It was handy. The Blegen’s slept upstairs, and the store was in the front. They cooked and ate in the back of the store. We did not go there too often. There were two hitching posts on the north side of the store and possibly six hitching posts on the west side. This store building at Lynn Lake was later owned by N. O. Monson, who moved it to Roslyn in the early fall of 1914. It was the first building in the new town of Roslyn”

Lynn was active in early politics

Lynn was active in early politics. The *Webster World* of April 1904, says. "A Republican Caucus was held last Saturday In C. E. Blegen's store for the purpose of nominating three delegates to the County convention April 25, 1904. Elected were Olaf Grue, George Engebretson and C. E. Blegen." The political bug might have bitten Blegen at this time or else he considered politics more attractive and/or better paying as he sold his store and became Day County Auditor. Esther Farness, Day County Auditor, informed me that Blegen took office March 5, 1907.

The blacksmith shop was located north of the buttermaker's in a little hollow close to the road. The first blacksmith was Lauris Fjerdlingstad. He had two daughters named Sigrid and Allete. I kidded Ben McCarlson and asked him how he could remember the first names of the blacksmith's daughters and could not remember the first name Bang, the Danish buttermaker. The blacksmith also operated a feed mill for three or four years, probably under the same roof. When Fjerdlingstad became 'too old to grind feed any longer, the mill went out of existence. The second blacksmith was Peter Johnson.

Celebrations popular

Lynn was a popular place for celebrations. "*Lynn Echoes*" in the *Webster World* for May 1904, said, "About 400 people attended the May 17 celebration at Lynn Lake Tuesday, and those who attended from Webster reports an occasion long to be remembered. From 10:30 to 5:00 there was 'not a dull moment.'" Elias Wik and John Lokken spoke in Norwegian, the Pierpont Cornet Band gave a concert, and after the program the crowd enjoyed a ball game.

An interview with Daisy Potter recalled some of the highlights of early Sunday School picnics at Lynn Lake. Daisy said, "We had no trees or lakes close to our home, so we looked forward to the annual Sunday School picnics. It was a 12-mile ride from our farm home in Andover Township. We rode in a lumber wagon, and sat on hard boards laid across the wagon box. After the long, hot ride it was a relief to come to the cool shade and nice tall grass under the trees at Lynn Lake. We played while our mothers made lemonade and prepared dinner. The men put up swings, and after, dinner we had a wonderful afternoon of swinging and playing in the shade. Late in the afternoon we had another lunch. We hitched up the horses and made the long ride back home in the cool evening air." And so it was in Lynn, a town....

¹From the *Reporter & Farmer*, Webster, SD Wednesday, June 19, 1968

The following photographs were kindly provided by Mr. Norman Sparby whose family was one of the original settlers of Lynn, SD.



The Sparby home in Lynn, SD



The Barn at Lynn, SD



Green Bank School #150 Lynn Township, Day Co SD