

Helena History Compiled for Tom's Tidbits on KCHK Radio
By Clerk DeAnn Croatt

I have compiled the following by going through Historic Records, including all Minute Books. Recent information is available on the township website: www.helena-township.com.

Helena Township doesn't have the 36 square miles that commonly make up a township, because the northern portion of the City of New Prague lies within Helena Township's 36 square mile area. Helena Township has 34.7 square miles. Of that, 33.5 square miles is land and 1.2 square miles is water. The elevation is 915 feet.

Helena Township is one of eleven townships in Scott County. The population is approximately 1,800. County Road 8 is the northerly boundary line, Highway 19 the southerly line, Aberdeen Avenue is the westerly line, and Baseline Blvd. and Baseline Avenue are the easterly lines. Cedar Lake is divided down the middle with the west half in Helena Township, and the east half in Cedar Lake Township, except for a tiny peninsula on the east side that extends into Helena Township, with only two or three lots affected.

Helena Township was first settled in 1854, and organized May 12, 1858. At that time, there was a railway station on the northerly line. The early village was platted in 1856 in Section 11 by John C. Smith.

Helena Township in Scott County was settled and named by the same parties who went on to settle Helena, Montana. There are twenty other towns throughout the United States named Helena, and a few more throughout the world, namely two in Croatia, and one each in South Africa, Guyana, Germany and Bolivia.

There are about 515 households in Helena today. The average population density is 43 people per square mile, and the average family size is 3.4.

Current officers are:

- Chair John Wermerskirchen, served since 2015
- Supervisor Edward Nytes, served from 1992-2002 and 2012-present
- Supervisor Duane Deutsch, first elected 1989
- Treasurer Nathan Hutton, elected 2018
- Clerk DeAnn Croatt, served since 1986
- Deputy Clerk Jody Deutsch, appointed 2019
- Deputy Treasurer Pat Lambrecht, appointed 2018 (served as Treasurer from 1987-2018)
- Road Overseer Darryl Perkins

Here is a list of former officers to the best of my knowledge:

Year	Office	Name
1861	Supervisor	C. W. Pesutheres
1861	Supervisor	W. Siefert
1861	Clerk	Stephen Barnett
1864-1882	Clerk	Peter Rader
1869	Supervisor	Jacob Schwingler
1869	Supervisor	Fritz Swoboda
1869-79	Supervisor	Friedrich Ellies
1872	Supervisor	Peter Schiltz
1872-74	Supervisor	Anton Claus
1873	Supervisor	John Niclay
1873-74	Supervisor	John Landenberger
1874	Supervisor	Mathias Morawitz

1874	Treasurer	Michael Mertz
1875-76	Supervisor	Henry Loehen
1875-78	Supervisor	Cornelius Kehr
1876-78	Supervisor	Phil Krautkremer
1878-99	Supervisor	John Quain
1879-82	Supervisor	Christian Busch
1879	Supervisor	Anton Rochek
1881-86	Supervisor	Joseph Maruskar
1882-83	Supervisor	Niclas Miller
1882-99	Supervisor	Adolph Engel
1882-85	Treasurer	Matt Nachbar
1885-91	Clerk	John Joach
1885-99	Supervisor	Adolf Engel
1886-99	Treasurer	Thomas Hanzel
1892-1905	Clerk	George Beckmann
1892	Supervisor	Charles Holzer
1894-17	Supervisor	John Michael
1900-07	Supervisor	Matt Wolf
1901-07	Clerk	Frank B. Schmitz
1901-07	Treasurer	Anton. C. Hartmann
1904-15	Supervisor	Joseph Bastyr
1908	Clerk	Frank B. Schmitz
1908-09	Treasurer	John Hanzel
1908-17	Supervisor	Frank Maruska
1909-19	Clerk	F. J. Bisek (Frank)
1910-19	Treasurer	John Maruska
1914	Supervisor	Wencl Kotrch
1914-17	Treasurer	W. J. Schoenbauer
1915	Supervisor	Peter Busch
1918	Supervisor	Charles Flicek
1918	Supervisor	F. J. Bisek
1918-22	Supervisor	F. J. Bohnsack
1920-31	Supervisor	Frank Dols
1920-37	Clerk	Meinrad J. Busch (John)
1920-28	Treasurer	Charles F. Wrabek
1921-33	Supervisor	Thomas S. Kucera
1925	Supervisor	August Bohnsack
1925-31	Supervisor	John P. Nachbar
1928-30	Treasurer	Louis Holzer
1931-33	Treasurer	Henry Mamer
1931-32	Supervisor	Joseph F. Kucera
1931-40	Supervisor	Peter Rech
1931-41	Supervisor	Albert Seifert
1933-36	Supervisor	John Eischens
1935-37	Treasurer	Joseph Chalupsky
1936-56	Clerk	Lucille Busch
1939-44	Supervisor	Clarence J. Welter
1939-43	Treasurer	Joseph Solheid
1939-55	Supervisor	Joseph B Hartman
1951-53	Treasurer	Joseph Pexa
1940	Supervisor	Joseph M Pavek

1940	Supervisor	Frank F. Franek
1940	Supervisor	Frank Hanzal
1940-46	Supervisor	John L Schoenbauer
1941-47	Supervisor	Clarence J. Welter
1945-49	Treasurer	E.T. Schoenbauer
1946	Supervisor	Harold Rech
1948-58	Supervisor	Joseph W. Borak
1950-59	Supervisor	Ben Johannes
1955-61	Treasurer	Joseph Pexa
1957-60	Supervisor	E.T. Schoenbauer
1957-76	Clerk	Gilbert Bisek
1958-62	Supervisor	Tony Worm
1959-74	Supervisor	George Wolf
1960-87	Supervisor	LeRoy Schmitz
1962-85	Treasurer	Ben Novotny
1964-88	Supervisor	Jack Witt
1978-86	Clerk	Dallas Bohnsack
1977-89	Supervisor	Joe Pexa Jr.
1986-present	Clerk	DeAnn Croatt
1987-2018	Treasurer	Patricia Lambrecht
1992-2002	Supervisor	Edward Nytes
1989-present	Supervisor	Duane Deutsch
2012-present	Supervisor	Edward Nytes
2015-present	Supervisor	John Wermerskirchen
2018-present	Treasurer	Nathan Hutton

In addition to the officers, Helena hires **Road Overseers**. The present Road Overseer is Darryl Perkins. Prior to Darryl, the position was held by Wally Kubes, Werner Hartman, Tom Deutsch, Shorty Schmitz, Kevin Green and others. The Road Overseer coordinates road maintenance – both routine and special reconstruction projects.

In the early years, there were **more officers**, namely: Chairman, two Supervisors, a Clerk, a Treasurer, an Assessor, a Justice of the Peace, two Constables and a Pound master.

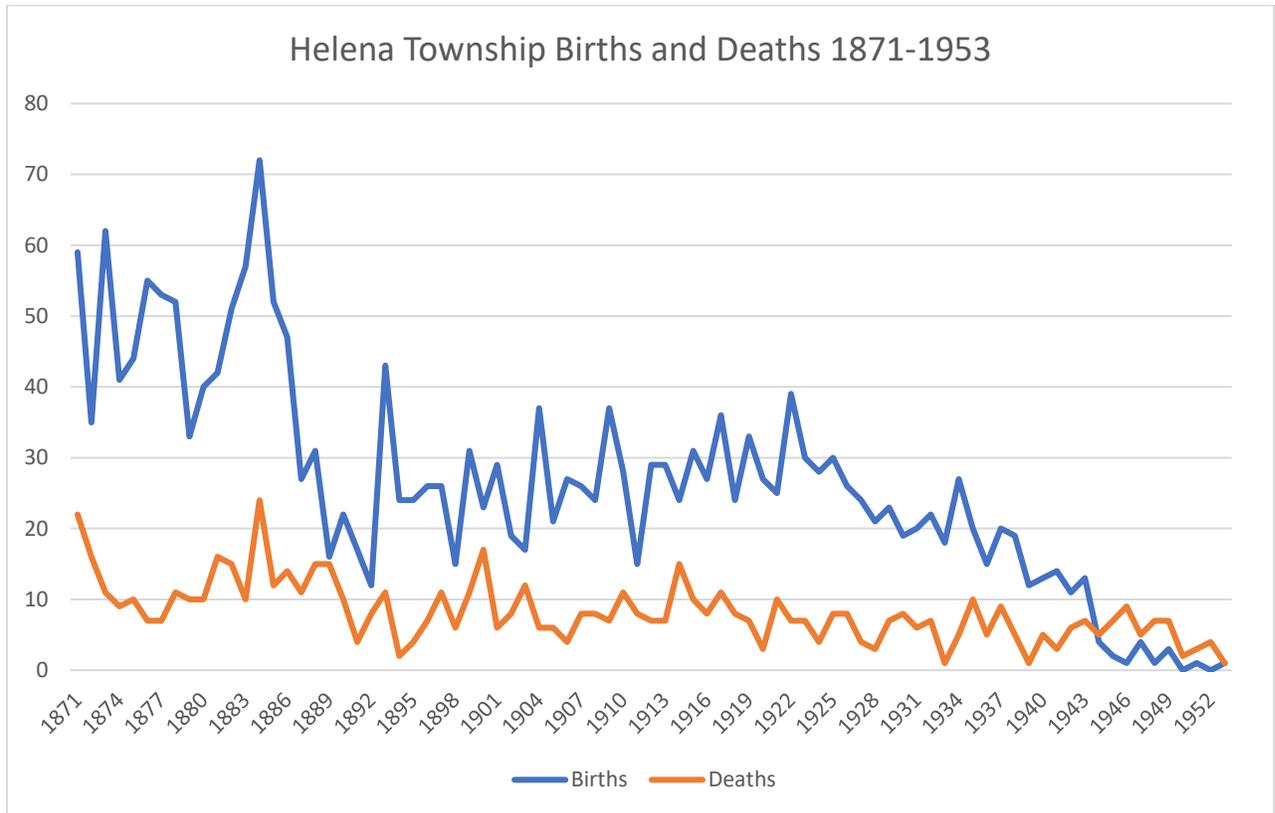
Until 1904 officers were **elected annually**. In 1904 supervisors were elected for a three-year term, and the clerk and treasurer remained as one-year terms.

Township meetings were typically held at the Clerk’s home until the St. Benedict Hall was rented for this purpose in 1959. Meetings continued there until the meetings moved to the New Prague Fire and Ambulance Garage in 2009. During pandemics, the township meets virtually.

The township has records of a number of **birth and death certificates**, dating from 1871 through 1953. There’s also a book of *“Permit for Burial or Removal”*. There are a few items of interest:

- Some **causes of death** were fever of the heart, tuberculosis, dropsy, old age, accidental gunshot wound, teething, typhoid fever, diphtheria, loss of vitality, shaking palsy, fractured leg and exhaustion
- When a **child was born**, they would list the occupation of the father only: most were farmers, but they were also merchants, blacksmiths, plasterers, saloon keepers, school teachers, lumbermen and carpenters
- Many of the **death certificates list a foreign country for the place of birth**, i.e., Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Holland, and Ireland were common.

This chart depicts births and deaths in Helena from 1871-1953. It's interesting that births exceeded deaths until 1944.



Early records were handwritten with lovely calligraphy-like handwriting. Many documents were simply stored in cardboard boxes and did not hold up well to time, moisture and *mice*.

The early records include a number of **petitions** from local property owners asking the board to consider taking over the maintenance a particular road. The board would then have a hearing and make a decision. These roads may or may not have been recorded. There were instances when the Board of Supervisors denied the establishment of a road and after going to District Court, the judge ruled in favor of the petitioner and forced the township to take over a roadway. There was one such incident in 1916 when Peter Schanus was awarded \$42.22, and the road became part of the township's inventory. Cartway petitions were also accepted by the township.

1858

First recorded **Oath of Office** taken

1860

Second election

1864

A **payroll** statement showed payment of \$1.00 each to the supervisors, road overseer and clerk. About this same time, a Road Tax was assessed to property owners. In addition, all male inhabitants of the township were required to work one days' highway labor each year. If anyone was slow to do his work, the clerk would send that person a registered 'severe' letter giving him a deadline. In the next few years, the officers wage increased to \$1.50 each month for their service.

1873

The township was divided into **14 Road Districts** and one Road Overseer was appointed for each district. Among the common names listed are Hartmann, Lambrecht, Barnett, Busch, Peters, and Wermerskirchen. It was a one-year appointment.

1874

There is a **petition** with fifteen signatures asking that the road between Jordan and New Prague be reconfigured to run along section lines, rather than cutting through family farms. As we know, the road is State Highway 21, and the petitioners were not successful.

At the 1874 Annual Meeting, the officers reported **total income from property taxes** for 1872-1873 was \$504.65; total expenditures were \$318.30 for a balance on hand of \$186.35.

1880

There is a contract with the Railroad Equipment Company with **The Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway Company** and the Township of Helena, dated February 13, 1880. At that time the railroad had 100 flat cars, 2 passenger cars, 2 baggage and smoking cars, 1 baggage and mail car, 100 box cars, 50 stock cars and 1 pay car.

1885

The State Board of Health of Minnesota wrote a scathing letter to Helena Township for not following up on a sick "**Glandered**" horse which had "Glanders" or "Farcy". The letter was handwritten by a veterinarian who threatened to enforce the penalty of the law against the chairman. The board actually had sent notice to the horse owner and advised him to either kill or quarantine the horse. The notice from Helena was signed by the "Board of Health of Helena". *The present-day clerk is exceedingly happy the town board is not the Board of Health of Helena.* Eventually, the board chairman ordered the horse to be killed and that was done swiftly. The horse owner asked that the horse be tested so he and all his neighbors would know the results, and either take additional precautions or be assured other animals were not at risk. The autopsy determined the horse's "trouble was all in the lungs" and was not Glanders or Farcy.

1886

The Board decided to rebuild and repair a **bridge** and asked for bids. The bridge was a wooden structure and traversed Sand Creek. The engineering fee was \$160. The accepted bid was \$600. Later that year, a culvert was repaired and the cost shared among the three property owners at \$0.20 per rod.

It is interesting to note that in 1886 the township worked with **Anton Philipp** on a ditch issue. Anton Philipp was a founder of New Prague. Anton Philipp, a **Bavarian**, was the *first settler to come to New Prague in 1856*. When he arrived in St. Paul, Philipp sought the counsel of Bishop Joseph Cretin who told him the best lands in the Minnesota Valley were occupied already, but the territory south of Shakopee held great promise. Philipp was also a contractor who dug two ditches for the township, three feet wide by two feet deep, with twenty feet between them in Section 34. The ditches were 44 rods in length at a cost of \$0.25/lineal rod.

The township **contracted with the railroad** to deliver gravel and old ties for a road project in Section 22, noting they wished the delivery prior to ground freeze-up. As it turned out, they received 70 cars of gravel after the ground was frozen.

1894

Townships listed **delinquent real and personal property taxes**; 1894 was a typical year. The total unpaid was \$9.60 for ten properties; the smallest amount owed was \$0.06 for a property in Section 35, and the highest amount owed was \$2.62 for a property in Section 21.

1895

When culverts were being installed or repaired, the board often **purchased the wood from local residents**. In 1895 the township paid \$32.45 for 1,526 feet of white oak planks from Peter Deutsch, and \$23.04 for 1,280 feet of from Gerhart Pousch. It was also common to pay residents for blading township roads. The Road Overseer for each of the districts would ensure their roads were graded, and all culverts and bridges were maintained.

1897

There was a little snafu related to **citizenship and voting** in 1897. An amendment to the state constitution made it unlawful to vote or file for office, in a township election, if that person was foreign born. Until the amendment could be corrected by legislators, the Attorney General made a ruling that only those persons who were full citizens of the United States on December 9, 1896 and who have resided for at least thirty days in the township, were eligible to be elected to a town office at the town meeting March 9, 1897. Following that decision, the township clerk followed up with this question to the county attorney: *“can foreign born persons who resided in Minnesota when it was a Territory and lived here ever since, vote at an Election? Some are here, who never took out any citizen papers, but claim that they became citizens when Minnesota changed from a Territory to Statehood”*. The answer was: *“foreign born persons who were inhabitants of Minnesota on May 11, 1858, the date of the admission of the state into the Union, and who had prior to that time declared their intention to become citizens of the United States (taken out first papers) or who are sons of fathers who had, prior to that time, declared their intention to become citizens of the United States and who, if governed by the last statement, were under the age of 21 years when their fathers so declared, are citizens of the United States by adoption and entitled to all the privileges of such. The act of admission of Minnesota into the Union produces this result. Such persons are entitled to vote in this state.”* The attorney went on to clarify that if the person had not taken out the first papers, he was not going to make a judgement on whether or not that person could vote.

1905

It is noted that townships need to **post meeting notices**, which was true from their formation, and is still true today. In the late 1800s and early 1900s the posting locations were at the Poll House, at St. Benedict and at George Beckmann’s Store. As years went by, the requirement to post in three locations was changed to posting in one location, along with publishing in the town newspaper. Currently Helena posts at the Office of the Clerk, and publishes in the Jordan Independent and in the New Prague Times. About two-thirds of the township has a New Prague address, with one-third a Jordan address. There are also two school districts and fire districts align with the school districts.

1910

Road Overseers continued to be appointed annually. By 1910 some common names were Gerold, Beckmann, Hartmann, Kubes, Maruska, Schmitz, Deustermann, Svobodny, Miller and Deutsch. In 1914 Road Overseers stopped being annual appointment for the 14 districts. When one road overseer quit or got fired (1928) a new one was appointed. The only other office was for **Constable**. Helena still has the constable badge and it’s a treasured piece of history!

1916

There was a sudden increase in the number of checks being written at each monthly meeting. Upon examination, it appeared that toward the end of the year, **property owners could submit for work they had done on their road**. A typical entry is: #139 to John Michael (dragging $\frac{3}{4}$ mile 10 times) for a total of \$5.00.

1917

In August of 1917 the township **borrowed**

- \$900 from F. J. Bohnsack for one year and bearing .05% interest
- \$500 from Henry Deutsch for one year and bearing .05% interest

It is my understanding that borrowing money from local residents was common in the early 1900s. Later, in 1927, \$1,000 was borrowed from the New Prague Creamery Association with an interest rate of 4.5%.

It was about this time that the calligraphy-like **penmanship** changed to simple cursive.

Townships were involved in establishment and maintenance of **property line fences**. In 1920 a farmer was ordered to remove a fence he had erected which caused a road obstruction. This was not a usual incident.

1919

In 1919 the township obtained the opinion of **Attorney General** related to procedures for establishing a township road on the border of two townships, which then becomes a shared township road with a maintenance agreement. For Helena, we have a shared road with both Cedar Lake Township and Sand Creek Township.

1922

In this era, it was common to allow property owners to buy **dynamite** for removal of large stumps that were negatively impacting township roads. The township paid for the dynamite, which was usually purchased from Juni Hardware.

Precinct Returns November 4, 1924

Township residents voted in favor of a gas tax, a public terminal grain elevator, reforestation of the land, and to prevent forest fires. Voters supported an Independent rather than Republic Coolidge for President. None of the other offices on the ballot displayed a **party affiliation** (governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, treasurer, attorney general, railroad and warehouse commissioner, chief justice of the supreme court, congress, representative, and probate court judge).

1928

The clerk worked with **Jordan Electric Lights and Heating Company** so they would locate their poles at the edge of the road right-of-way instead of placing them in the center of the ditch. At this same time, the township had a property owner put obstructions on a roadway, which resulted in a trip to District Court. The judge ordered the property owner to *“stop interfering with road maintenance, to refrain from interfering with the public’s enjoyment of the road, and to remove all obstructions placed by him, his servants or agents”*. It took many years for the township to develop a road system. It was driven by petitions from property owners, which is somewhat still the process today.

1929

Among the documents, a **blue print** for a standard double 8-foot x 6-foot box culvert was dated April 1, 1929.

About this same time, the supervisors invited the county commissioners to a meeting to discuss why the township was not getting their fair share of **gas tax** distribution. Gas tax proved to be an ongoing issue for the township as many meetings with the county commissioners were recorded for the purpose of trying to get the township’s share of Gas Tax money.

For a few years, the township was able to haul gravel from a pit within the township (**Hartmann Pit**) which kept costs down; however, the pit ran out of gravel in 1929. During this same period, the township was erecting snow fences to help snow plowing efforts. The work was done by the landowners with that district’s Road Overseer.

1930

In 1930 there was a **Public Examiner** who reported on revenues, expenditures and debt of all townships in the state. The total income for Helena was \$5,851.98; total expenditures were \$5,187.64. Some of the comments and recommendations are quite interesting, most notably:

1. The clerk's register of receipts and disbursements and board minutes were well kept. Then mentioned several claims and paid orders for the year 1924-1925 were missing from the files.
2. The examination of the treasurer's records disclosed that the treasurer had from time to time diverted town funds to his own account. On the date of audit, the treasurer's cash was short \$203.56. The examination also disclosed that the former treasurer had diverted town funds for his own use but made settlements from time to time.
3. Loans had been made by the board at various times and at the present time \$2,000 of the outstanding orders cover such loans. There is no provision in the statutes for borrowing money in this manner by a town board.
4. There were a number of 'illegal payments':
 - a. There is no authority for payment of \$4.00 or \$4.80 for officer's attendance at meetings within or without the town; they are entitled to \$3.00 per day and no traveling expense.
 - b. Payments made to supervisors for weed work are unauthorized.
 - c. The clerk is entitled to compensation for services at \$3.00 per day for attending board meetings which includes recording of proceedings; an extra charge for recording proceedings is not authorized by law.
 - d. There is no provision in the law for payment of Moderators at annual town meetings.
 - e. Payments to dependent minor sons of officers are violations of Section 1096, Mason's Statutes.
 - f. The maximum compensation for supervisors is \$90.00 per year.

At the October 8, 1930 meeting, **Sheriff Weckmann** asked the board for their help apprehending a thief in the area; the reward was \$100.

1931

Among the township records are several **Old Age Pension Applications**. One gentleman was appealing to the State of Minnesota for financial help and the township certified that he indeed was a resident of the township. This 74-year-old paid *"large sums for taxes on one hundred and twenty acres of land and on his personal property. That about 19 years ago, this applicant sold his farm in Scott County and this applicant permitted certain of his children to invest the proceeds of the sale of his farm, all of which has been lost."* The application went on to attest that all of his children have large families and are heavily in debt and are unable to care for and support this applicant. The present-day clerk is glad the township is no longer involved in this program.

1937

The newly formed **Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative** was formed to bring electricity to farmers in the area. On September 28, 1937 the cooperative was granted permission to erect poles and install lines within all the township road right of ways.

The fire fund in 1937 was \$600.

July 30, 1940

At the regular monthly meeting, the subject of **voting booths** received much discussion. The old booths were in disrepair but new ones were exceedingly expensive. The old booths were repaired and served the township until well into the 2000s, at which time they were donated to Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative for elections. The township moved to portable tabletop booths, as did the co-op.

March 11, 1942

Helena Township actively lobbied for the purchase of a new **highway motor patrol**. Local dairy and small grain farmers were concerned that inadequate roads would result in them not being able to move their milk and grain to market. They were also very concerned about snow removal. The request went on to say, *"we feel that if we are to continue to support the war effort of our country to the fullest of our ability, we should have the new motor patrol"*. The Township was informed that a Highway Patrol (motorized grader) was to be stationed at New Prague, primarily because of the hospital, fire department, Farmer's Cooperative Creamery, and Minnesota Valley Breeders Artificial

Insemination Headquarters, which were all located in New Prague. Thereafter New Prague was served by a motor grader rather than a horse powered grader.

There was a **snow storm during one township election**. One of the officers was afraid his opponent was going to win because the bad weather was keeping so many voters from the polls. The officer decided to go home, hitch up his horses to a sleigh and picked up ten of his neighbors to vote. At the end of the day the votes were counted, and he did not get ten votes, and lost the election.

It was also in 1942 that the **State Attorney General** notified the township that the county *may* turn over a portion of the gas tax, but the county could not be forced to do so.

August 25, 1942

Road turnbacks are nothing new! The state can turn roads back to the county, who in turn can turn roads back to townships. The roads are to be brought to standard condition prior to turning them back. Turnbacks are usually done as the traffic patterns change. At the August meeting the board was informed they would be getting half mile in Section 5 from Scott County.

1946

Today businesses and townships require a **Certificate of Insurance** for vendors; however, back in 1946 vendors provided a sworn affidavit of insurance coverage instead.

1951

George Simota asked the board to snow plow on his road in exchange for George blading and graveling the road as needed. The township was willing to do so, but needed to check with an attorney first; in 1959 George's road became a township road.

1954

Sometimes the **Minutes** didn't tell the whole story. Once such case was in September of 1954 when one neighbor complained about his neighbor's cattle damaging his crops. He asked the board to help him do something about it. The end. There is no way to know if the cattle kept getting nourishment from his land, or not.

1955

The township certified 30 miles of **township roads**; all were gravel. For comparison, in 2020 Helena Township has 31.9 miles of roadway, with about 5 of those miles being bituminous roadways.

During these years, the township hired **Billy Tupy** to plow snow. As part of the agreement, the township helped pay rent for the storage of his snow plow at the school garage in New Prague.

April 28, 1959

The following resolution was adopted: *"Notice is hereby given that it is declared unlawful for any person to cause or permit any garbage, tin cans, glass containers, cardboard boxes, rocks, or any other discarded **refuse** to be thrown upon any road or roadside property of Helena Township, Scott County, Minnesota, or to fail or neglect or refuse to remove the same from any such property. Violation is a misdemeanor. Any person caught violating this resolution will be prosecuted and is subject to \$100 fine."* The township is still plagued with litter in township road ditches. When this happens, the Road Overseer investigates and the township charges the guilty party for the cost of removal.

1960

By this time, the number of road districts had been decreased from fourteen to six. The road overseers in 1960 were Gerald Von Bank, Francis Nachbar, Edward Pexa, Joseph Adolph and Virgil Hartman. Sometimes one **Road Overseer** would manage more than one district.

Also, this year, **Attorney Wann** was hired to draw up an ordinance forbidding trailer parks in Helena Township.

Sometimes board members have a difficult time when they need to deal with **complaints between neighbors**. On July 12, 1960 the board chair and clerk met to review a complaint that someone's neighbor was depositing chicken litter upon town property near the neighbor's home. The board turned the matter over to the Scott County Sheriff who advised them to sign a complaint to have the accused brought into court for a decision on the matter. The board obliged and the sheriff took complete charge of the matter.

Sometimes, if a road wasn't in good shape, **school buses** couldn't get to a farm place to pick up children. This was the case when two residents came to the board and asked for help getting a road built to their properties. Land needed to be acquired from a neighbor before a bus turnaround could be built. The neighbors worked together and soon the school children were happily riding the bus to class!

On April 26, 1966 Ralph Hendricks was granted a Deviating Use Permit to utilize his property as picnic grounds, camping and general recreational use. This later became Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park, owned and managed by Scott County.

February 6, 1962

Scott County townships met at Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative and decided to meet annually each spring. This organization is now called the **Scott County Township Association** and meets twice each year – fall and spring. The dues were \$25.

May 10, 1962

Working with the **railroad** has always been a challenge. Back in 1962 the township had to almost demand the railroad do something about their crossings. Finally, after much discussion and delay, the township persuaded the railroad to place planked crossings in all grade crossings in Helena Township.

1963

The development **Raven Stream Plats One and Two** were in the works. The land owners were John Gehlen, Lee Walberg and Dr. Vollmar. After the plat was presented to the board, and after the board's requested changes were agreed to, the plat was approved. The development had gravel roads until 1991, at which time the residents petitioned the board for a bituminous road. It was subsequently reconstructed in 2019.

1964

At their regular monthly meeting, the board discussed **vandalism** to township signs. The clerk was instructed to publish a notice in the New Prague Times with regard to shooting of road signs and other acts of vandalism.

1965

A group of property owners on the north side of New Prague attended the town board meeting to ask for the board's help to stop the city's proposed **sewer project** in their neighborhood. The board agreed to meet with the city. At a later meeting engineers for the city explained how the new plant is going to operate so that it would not stink.

1966

There is a reference to "**Old Helena**" when discussing a bridge over Sand Creek. They determined the bridge needed to be barricaded and closed.

A common problem was when a household hooked up their sewer line to the **farm tile system**. Once such instance was discovered, and it was immediately resolved. Unfortunately, this practice continued for several more years.

On March 28, 1967 Wally Kubes turned in his resignation as **Main Road Overseer**. According the Minutes, his replacement would not be named until they found someone interested in the position.

1969

The township met at the courthouse, along with other township, city and village officials to discuss the feasibility of having one full time assessor hired by the county to replace each local assessor.

Busse Construction was hired to do a project for Helena Township. The township enjoyed a long working relationship with Busse, who did both snow plowing and road grading for many years. When Busse went out of business, the township contracted with Jeff Klehr for maintenance and Art Johnson for snow removal.

At the October meeting, Mayor Al Slavik attended the township meeting to discuss a **serious dog problem**. A large dog was being allowed to run loose and he stated the dog was a dangerous threat to their neighborhood. He requested the township require the owner to tie his dog at all times. The township agreed to contact Attorney O'Neill and would do as instructed by legal counsel. The board discussed drawing up a new dog ordinance, which wasn't done because dogs are covered by state statutes. The dog issue was discussed at a few more meetings, carrying into 1970.

In November the Scott County Township Association met and there was a *"very forceful discussion of the **county zoning ordinance**"*. When things are going well in a township, this topic doesn't come up, but as soon as there is an injustice viewed by a township, this topic comes up.

1971

On February 23, 1971 the township adopted an ordinance, with all good intentions, to **regulate activity on Cedar Lake** by prohibiting nuisances. It appears the ordinance was adopted by motion. It did not receive a hearing, nor was it signed, published or filed.

1973

On March 26, 1973 Clerk Gilbert Bisek attended the county planning commission on behalf of the Helena Town Board and delivered to the county planning commission, the board's decision to accept the lake shore property on **Pleasant Lake** from Charles Barta.

Attorney Robert O'Neil was hired to represent Helena Township as plaintiffs in an order to have township property included in the **Metro Sewer Service** district.

In May of 1973 New Prague and Helena began discussions of an **Orderly Annexation Agreement**. The discussions included Lanesburgh Township, which complicated issues because there were two counties involved in the negotiation, both LeSueur and Scott. Not all roads in the township had names, so through this process all town roads and cartways were assigned identifying names. The setback requirements were also established. The actual agreement was finalized in 1978.

Plat Three was proposed for **Raven Stream**. Two local hog farmers attended meetings to ensure their hog confinement operation would not be negatively impacted by additional development in the area.

1974

At one time **St. Wenceslaus** requested a conditional use permit to site a cemetery in Section 27 of Helena Township. After viewing the property and determining the water table was too high and drainage was poor, the site was determined to be unsuitable.

1975

The township paid for 50% of the cost to dustcoat gravel township roads. The resident needed to apply for dustcoating. Later practice was for the township to decide where to dustcoat.

1976

The township worked with **Attorney Wallace Gustafson**, Willmar, who was a much-respected attorney for many townships throughout Minnesota. Townships also had the pleasure of working with Attorney John Dooley.

That April **Scott County Commissioner Tony Worm** attended the meeting to ensure proper postings were done by the township. Worm emphasized this was the law and officers said going forward they intend to fully comply and will keep copies of the posted notices.

1977

Sometimes township officers display a **sense of humor**. On March 15, 1977 Supervisor Jack Witt was elected "Chairman of the Bored".

Discussion started for lots on Cedar Lake to have a **community septic** rather than individual systems. This came to fruition in the 1990s when the City of New Prague agreed to receive the effluence. All lots on the first and second tier around Cedar Lake were included, for both Cedar Lake and Helena Townships.

1978

Labor wage was set at \$4/hour.

Edmond Deutsch received a permit to locate a **saw mill** on his property.

From 1978 through 1992 the township's attorney was **Attorney Robert Nicklaus** from Chaska. His first job for the township was to finalize the Orderly Annexation Agreement with the City of New Prague. The township worked with **Engineer Les Olson** from 1989-1990, then Engineer Greg Halling from 1990 through 2016. The present-day engineer is with Hakanson Anderson.

1979

At the March 27, 1980 meeting **mileage** was set at \$0.19/mile.

That April the decision was made to eliminate the **Constable** position in the township.

1980

There was a years-long **hazardous waste siting process**, involving both Helena and Belle Plaine townships, which started in 1980. The township assisted the governor-appointed Local Project Review Committee in convincing the state legislators to remove our townships from site consideration, which happened eventually, but not until 1986.

1981

In April of 1981 several residents along **West Cedar Lake Drive** approached the township to improve their road. A portion of the road was still considered a Private road. It took much effort and time but by 1990 a new road was constructed. It was after this first major road reconstruction project, that the township decided to hold assessment hearings prior to bid acceptance, and only move forward with a project if there are no appeals.

The levy for the **New Prague Rural Fire Protection Association** was \$2,309/year. In 2020 it is \$75,787.46.

1987

Most people have driven the “new” **Bloomington Ferry Bridge**. The concept was first introduced to townships in 1987. It was completed in 1996 and started urban sprawl to the more rural areas of Scott County. Townships and cities were forewarned that industry and housing starts would be off the charts once the new bridge opened. That was true and continued until the 2008 recession. Growth is continuing, but not at such a rapid pace.

Over the years, township officers have had the opportunity to do some **lobbying**. As a result, officers had the privilege to meet and share ideas with such individuals as Governors C. Elmer Anderson, Arnie Carlson, Orville Freeman, Wendell Anderson, Rudy Perpich, Al Quie, Jesse Ventura, Tim Pawlenty, Mark Dayton and Tim Walz. Included in a list of Senators and Representatives are: Boschwitz, Purferst, Renneke, Schmitz, Oberstar, Durenberger, Robling, Wellstone, Kelso, Johnston, Molnau, and so many more who helped to influence decisions affecting township residents.

1987

The township hired **assessors** until the 1980s, at which time the township contracted with the Scott County Assessor’s Office. Back in 1987 the contract fee was \$2,600. In 2020 it is \$23,000. Charged are per parcel.

1988

The **Jordan Fire levy** was \$5,000 in 1988; today it is \$27,000.

Once a township officer moved their residency from the township, they were required to give up their position. This happened many times as retired farmers moved to town. The board would typically put an ad in the local papers, and after interviewing the applicants, would **appoint** someone to fill in until the next election.

1989

The township approved the first **cable television** extension permit so township residents could subscribe to cable.

1990

During the Annual Meeting, residents adopted the township’s **Right to Farm Ordinance**. This was updated in 2008.

1992

A common concern for townships with railroad tracks is the constant weed problem. When there’s a noxious weed problem, it’s frequently along railroad tracks. Communication with the railroad is an ongoing challenge.

In April the board developed a Loss Prevention Program (A Workplace Accident and Injury Reduction Act) and annually reviews the program. The township works with safety in mind at all times.

1995

In 1995 the board passed a resolution which states all **property taxes must be current** prior to any approvals for building permits, conditional use permits and variances.

Helena Township has always been involved in lobbying related to bills affecting township residents. The county association moves proposed bills forward to a district organization; from there to the state association for the membership to vote on at the Township Fall Conference. One very notable bill that made it all the way to the governor’s office was bill to allow townships to move township elections to the Uniform Election Day in November. Helena Officers worked with area Senator and Representatives (Carol Molnau, Terri Johnston and Becky Kelso) to change state laws to allow townships to move from the March elections to the November **Uniform Election Day**.

On March 12, 1996 voters in Helena Township passed the ballot question and the township transitioned quickly to November Elections. This has saved the township significant money!

1996

An active group of railway enthusiasts established a **Railway Museum** in Helena Township. It is located on Helena Blvd. There is a lot of work behind the scenes, and it is not yet open to the public.

1997

Kathy Bongard from Scott County Planning attended a District Four Township Meeting and talked about **building permits**. At one time it was determined a permit was not required if the building was portable. Someone went too far and attached handles every six feet to a large corn crib. That was the straw that changed the law! Now all buildings over 120 square feet require a building permit.

1998

Nine-ton road standards were adopted by the Helena Township Board on August 25, 1998. This is a standard now which may soon get upgraded to ten-ton because of the heavy farm equipment on township roads.

A **Fence Ordinance** was adopted which follows state statutes (Minnesota Fence Law, Chapter 344) when the fence is on a property line.

1999

The township hired Attorney Joel Jamnick to negotiate a new **Orderly Annexation Agreement** with the City of New Prague. The process started in 1999 and was never successful. After hiring the present Attorney Bob Ruppe, a review of the agreement resulted in keeping the original 1978 agreement as it was most fair for the township.

2000

The county started establishing a **trail system** as people were becoming more physically active, and walking and biking on busy road ways was not safe. The township designated areas they would like to see incorporated into the county's plan; however local residents were very much against it and progress stopped.

2003

A developer approached the township about **Silver Maple Bay Estates** along Cedar Lake. They donated land to the county for expanding the park system in exchange for more density. When the developer filed bankruptcy in 2008 an incomplete community sewer system automatically turned over to the township. Officers worked diligently with state legislators, the county and the city to allow these 58 lots to attach to a pipeline to the city's sewer treatment facility. Once that was accomplished, the failing community system was decommissioned. The Project Manager moved from the township prior to the completion of the decommissioning process, but agreed to stay on as Project Manager, not knowing how long that would be... Terry Maas was finally able to successfully close the books on the Subordinate Service District decommissioning December 7, 2017. The township received an award from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and the University of Minnesota Driven to Discover™ in partnership with the Bush Foundation for this conversion project.

2004

Over the years the township has had both solid cul-de-sacs and island **cul-de-sacs**. The board felt maintenance was much less for island cul-de-sacs so on March 3, 2004 a township resolution was adopted to require island cul-de-sacs for all future development. This allowed for better snow removal and a place for runoff. This was revised in 2017 in that the township's engineer will determine the best type of turnaround; a T, a solid cul-de-sac, or an island cul-de-sac.

In November Commissioner Joe Wagner attended the meeting to discuss a **County Road 8 Corridor Study**. There were several landowners along the proposed route who organized and worked for several years to successfully discredit the concept of running the proposed arterial road through properties, rather than to follow established township and property lines.

2005

A corridor study was being conducted for a **CAPX2020** 69kV Transmission line. There were several meetings, sponsored by Great River Energy (GRE). In general GRE was receptive to property owners' suggestions and comments. Adjustments were made to the route, sometimes because GRE found a willing seller and sometimes because the proposed changes made sense. There is a substation called the Helena Substation however it is located in Belle Plaine Township.

Every few years the **Department of Natural Resources** pursues land purchases from private owners. This land becomes part of the state's inventory of public lands. Once that happens, the former agricultural land is removed from tax rolls. The last time this happened in Helena Township was in 2005.

2006

After the Bloomington Ferry Bridge opened up Scott County for more development, and until the 2008 Recession, the township was involved in **annexations** to the City of New Prague. The township adopted a resolution setting the annexation fee at \$250 per acre, which is paid by the developer, not the city.

Because of development along the east side of New Prague, the township road, **Alton Avenue**, was getting excessive traffic. As a result, the township negotiated a maintenance agreement with the city who, because of the unusual circumstances related to traffic patterns, pays the township \$2,000 annually for extra dustcoating and grading.

Scott County introduced a new **Code Enforcement Program** with all eleven townships. The officer assists townships with compliance and enforcement of property standards. A good example of this is when there is a Conditional Use Permit issued to a business (with certain parameters on the number of employees, how much traffic, and other such matters that may impact neighbors), and when neighbors notice violations, they are usually pretty quick to get this reported, especially if the business is not generally a 'good neighbor'.

2007

As more people were relying on cell phones for communication, cell phone companies added **towers** as demand grew. Helena approved additional attachments to the Bevcomm tower in Grassy Trails east of New Prague, and added a new tower in Helena Township west of New Prague. Since then, cell phone coverage has improved greatly.

Federal money supported a road directional sign replacement program for townships in Minnesota. Helena got on-board early as there were several signs which were very old. The state set guidelines as to the location of each sign and deviation from their guidelines was difficult. The signs are tested each year for **retro reflectivity**, and replaced as needed. Testing the signs is a job for one of the "Senior" officers as the person testing needs to be a minimum of sixty-five years old. The project was funded and completed in 2011.

2009

Helena Township actively participated in two **Hazard Mitigation Plans** in partnership with Scott County Emergency Management. It's ironic that when we were creating the plan, the topic of Pandemic came up often. Planning for such an event was difficult to understand and appreciate the scope and impact on travel, food supplies, schools, hospitals, government and residents. In hindsight, this chapter may need to be reviewed post-COVID-19. Flooding and storms were the more likely events to plan for, and this plan was put into practice after the storm of June 19, 2014 when townships, cities and counties worked with FEMA for funding. The first plan was adopted May 4, 2010.

On September 1, 2009 Helena Township **moved the meetings and elections** to the New Prague Ambulance Conference Room, in an agreement with the city. The room worked well for a while, but when there were township functions, the ambulance personnel were displaced. Moreover, when the city moved from a volunteer ambulance service, to a private service, personal changed and there were several overlapping needs for the room. In more recent years the township held meetings and elections in the Fire Hall, which is a larger room.

2011

The township adopted an Ordinance regulating the removal of **hazardous trees** from township road rights-of-way, and Minnesota Statute 429.101 set forth the guidelines for the tree owner to pay all related costs.

In April **Sand Creek Adventures** obtained a favorable recommendation to build structures for a zip line business. This is located off 220th Street (County Road 8).

2014

When a **bridge** is reconstructed, the township works with Scott County in cooperation with federal agencies for funding. The most recent new bridge is near the St. Benedict Ball Park. The township learned it is common practice to eliminate guard rails. That was a surprising change.

There is an **intersection of two county roads** in Helena Township which had a number of very serious vehicle accidents over the years. The township adopted a resolution to ask the county to make improvements to that intersection in an effort to decrease incidents. Signage has changed and a round-about is scheduled for construction in 2021.

Over the years, Helena Township felt frustration over the power held by the **Metropolitan Council**. At times it seems local legislators cannot be as effective as they should be, because of Met Council's controls. Scott and Carver county have a district representative on the board, and it's most helpful if that representative is in tune with locals needs.

2015

Two **solar gardens** were built in Helena Township, both along Helena Blvd. They are both smaller than originally thought because Xcel Energy did not have the capacity to take more load. In both instances, the companies signed a long-term lease on the land and provided a decommissioning plan.

2016

Koch located a pumping substation south of Cedar Lake in Helena Township.

Scott County Clerks started to meet every other month to share Best Practices. After a couple of years, they invited the Treasurers to join them. This has been very helpful; we share ideas and help each other out. New Clerks and Treasurers find that we always have each other's back.

Sometimes township officers learn things they never knew they'd need to learn! Years ago, we attended a seminar on what to do with **troublesome beavers** who build dams and flood roads. We didn't need this information then, but it sure came in handy in 2016 when that exact scenario happened in our township. It took a while, but several trapped beavers later, and a little excavating, the water resided and the road was repaired.

2016 is the year Scott County, along with townships and cities revised the Comprehensive Plan, called the **2020 Comp Plan**. A lot of good work was done by county staff, with input and open houses throughout the county, and the final version will be sent in 2020 to Metropolitan Council for their review and approval.

2017

In Helena Township, we don't get one project wrapped up before the next one comes our way. As it turns out, there's a piece of land northeast of New Prague that is going to be a perfect location for **FaithPoint Lutheran Church**.

That project started in 2017 and ground breaking was fall of 2020. The contractor improved 270th Street West and applied a bituminous surface.

The Clerk and Treasurer in Helena work from home on personal computers. That changed in 2017 when the township purchased a dedicated **laptop** for each of them. Now upon a retirement, the transfer of records is much easier. The township also rents a climate-controlled storage unit for records and election equipment.

2018

The Board of Supervisors, in alignment with Scott County standards, adopted a policy to include a **uniform mailbox post**, installed by the township as part of a new driveway permit. The new posts swing-away when hit by snow and result in fewer mailbox damages.

2019

In 2018 the township started **partnering with Scott County** for seal coating and crack-filling on bituminous roads. This process has saved both time and money. Our projects are included with several others so every entity can enjoy the economies of scale.

Helena Township is part of an initiative to bring **broadband** to underserved portions of our township. The funding was through the Federal CARES Act during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cedar Lake and Helena Townships adopted a new **Town Line Road Agreement** for Baseline Blvd. and Baseline Avenue. The former agreement was eighteen years old and needed fresh ideas.

2020

In March the township adopted a resolution to allow teleconference meetings during the **COVID-19** pandemic. The township will return to regular meetings once Governor Walz lifts the Peacetime Emergency. Special precautions are planned for the August 11th Primary and the November 3rd General Election.