

Ole J. Flaa

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Ole J. Flaa, one of the leading and well-known merchants of Boyd was born in Fillmore county on February 11, 1868, the son of John O. and Maret (Malhus) Flaa, the former of whom was born in Norway on January 7, 1843, the son and only child of O. J. and Betsie Flaa, well-known residents of the community in which they lived. The mother died when the son, John O. Flaa, was but eight days old, and the father died when he was but a lad. John O. Flaa remained a resident of his native country until he was twenty-four years of age. As a young man in the land of his birth he worked as a farm hand. In 1867 he was united in marriage to Maret Malhus, daughter of John and Gertrude Malhus, natives of Norway, who in 1874 came to the United States and proceeded on out to Minnesota, locating in Baxter township, Lac qui Parle county, where they spent the rest of their lives. Mr. and Mrs. Malhus were the parents of four children, two of whom remained in Norway and two, Mrs. Flaa and Jens, came to America.

Eight days after their marriage John O. and Maret Flaa left the land of their birth and young manhood and womanhood and came to the United States. On landing in this country they proceeded direct to Iowa, where they located in Winneshick county and there they remained for five years, Mr. Flaa being engaged in farming. In 1872 they decided to come to Minnesota and obtain a farm and a home for themselves. They located in Lac qui Parle county and pre-empted one hundred and sixty acres of land in section 23, of Baxter township, the tract at that time being all wild prairie and without improvements of any kind. With hard work and persistent effort, Mr. and Mrs. Flaa succeeded in making the farm one of the finest in the township and there they made their home until 1912, when they retired to Boyd. During his active life Mr. Flaa was a most successful general farmer and stock raiser, and in time became the owner of two hundred and forty acres of excellent land, all of which is well improved and under a high state of cultivation. He has always been a believer in intensive farming and thorough cultivation, and even yet, though not active in the work, he sees to it that his broad acres are well cultivated and cared for.

In addition to his personal interests in the farm work, John O. Flaa always took an active interest in local affairs and had much to do with the civic life of the township and the county during their early history and later progress and growth. For thirty years he served as school clerk in Baxter township and was always much interested in the success of the schools and worked to place them upon a higher and a more useful plane. On January 1, 1917, he enters upon his twenty-fifth year of service as county commissioner of Lac qui Parle and during that time he has seen the transition of the county from its condition in pioneer days to its present advanced position in the galaxy of splendid counties of the great state of Minnesota.

To John O. and Maret Flaa have been born the following children: Ole, John, Betsie, Julia, Gerhard, John, Alfred, Christina, Jens and Martin. The family were always

active members of the United Lutheran church and took much interest in all church work, much of the success of the early church in Baxter township being due to the untiring efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Flaa.

Ole J. Flaa settled in Baxter township with his parents in 1872, the family making the trip by ox-team. They were the first to locate in that part of Baxter township and in consequence endured many of the hardships of the early pioneer life on the plains. Neighbors were far apart and the family larder was not always as well filled as that of the successful farmer of today. To this family is due much of the early success and development of this community. It was here that Old J. Flaa was reared on his father's farm and educated in the common schools of the county and at Windom Institute at Montevideo. As a lad he assisted his father on the farm. After completing his education he entered the mercantile business at Boyd, with a Mr. Bye, under the firm name of Bye & Flaa. This business they continued for a number of years, after which Mr. Bye sold his interest to another, Mr. Flaa retaining his interest in the business. Later the store was sold and Mr. Flaa entered the real-estate, loan and insurance business, which business he conducted for a number of years, at the end of which time he entered the hardware business with his brother, John J. Flaa, under the firm name of Flaa Brothers, which business they still conduct. In 1899 Mr. Flaa was appointed postmaster of Boyd and the office was located in the building with the hardware store until 1913, at which time, owing to the rapid growth of the mercantile business, the postoffice was moved to its present location and Mr. Flaa continued to serve as postmaster until March 16, 1916, when he was succeeded by a Democrat.

In addition to his many personal interests, Mr. Flaa has taken a keen interest in the civic and financial affairs of the town in which he has so long been identified. He assisted in the organization of the First State Bank of Boyd, but later sold his stock. He was also one of the prime movers in the organization of the Boyd National Bank and is the vice-president of that institution. He is a Republican and for years has been recognized as one of the leaders of that party in his community.

In October, 1892, Ole J. Flaa was united in marriage to Mary Tragetpon, of Lisbon, in the adjoining county of Yellow Medicine, and to this union have been born the following children: Joseph, Morris, Mary, Melvin, Alice and Jeannette. Melvin is now deceased and the other children are all at home with their parents, except Joseph, editor of the Weekly Star at Reville, South Dakota, who married Olga Ling in 1914. The family are active members of the Trinity United Lutheran Church at Boyd and take much interest in the various beneficences of the same. Fraternally, Mr. Flaa is a member of the Modern Woodmen of America.

From early manhood Mr. Flaa has taken an active and an influential part in the civic life of the community. Before the village of Boyd was organized he held most of the township offices and since the incorporation of the village he has held similar positions in the office of the town. His effort has ever been for the betterment of the village and the community in which he lives.