

Nowthen

Then and Now

A History of Nowthen, Minnesota

By Lou Paulson

This book is dedicated to
the memory of my husband, Allerton,
and my children,
Al Paulson Jr. and Sherry Boyce

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Permission gratefully acknowledged to Linda Causton, Dick Erickson, and Ida Wyatt for use of articles previously published in *Nowthen Reflections* (1997). Also thanks to Harlan Meyer for his assorted photos of Nowthen businesses and the surrounding area.

Published by: DeForest Press
P.O. Box 383
Rogers, MN 55374 USA

www.DeForestPress.com

Toll-free: 866-509-0604

Shane Groth, Publisher

Richard DeForest Erickson, Founder

Cover design by Linda Walters, Optima Graphics, Appleton, WI

ISBN 978-1-930374-26-3

Printed in the United States of America

10 09 08 07

5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Paulson, Lou.

Nowthen, then & now : a history of Nowthen, Minnesota / by Lou Paulson.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-930374-26-7

1. Burns (Minn. : Township)--History. 2. Nowthen (Minn.)--History. 3. Burns (Minn. : Township)--Social life and customs. 4. Nowthen (Minn.)--Social life and customs. 5. Burns (Minn. : Township)--History--Pictorial works. 6. Nowthen (Minn.)--History--Pictorial works.

I. Title. II. Title: Nowthen, then and now.

F614.B87P38 2007

977.6'65--dc22

2007028005

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Publisher's Preface

In the spring of 1997, Lou Paulson came to me with a mass of Nowthen material, asking if I would publish her work. We were approaching the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Nowthen post office and the naming of the town in 1897 by a fascinating character, James Hare.

As with most small towns and townships, there had never been a history written of this quaint and colorful area in the northwest corner of Anoka County. Our family has been living on an old farm just outside Nowthen for thirty-five years now, and I have long bragged about the area and its history, always claiming the name Nowthen as my home town wherever I traveled. Naturally, that expression brings reactions and questions. With Lou and Marilyn Martin, who had been helping her, I approached the town board, saying, "You can't have a 100th Celebration without a history, and you don't have a history without Mrs. Paulson." The board gave us a grant to cover the physical printing of the book. The work to produce the book was to be volunteered. Naturally, the grant would have to be paid back following the celebration. With severe time pressure, the book, *Nowthen, Then and Now*, was published from Lou's work. Lou's passion for Nowthen and its story was finally brought into printed form and in time for the beautiful weekend of parade and display.

Now, ten years later, in this new and expanded edition, I have the chance to thank Linda Causton and Marilyn Martin who gave so much time and energy to help me with the typing, editing, layout and feature writing in producing that first edition of Lou's book. There could be no celebration without Lou's passion for the Nowthen history, and there would have been no publication that year without the work of Linda and Marilyn.

Now we are in the 110th year of Nowthen and the 150th year of Anoka County. That first edition of *Nowthen, Then and Now* is long sold out, and much has changed and expanded in the area. We have kept all of the material from the book, when appropriate, though we have updated when necessary and reorganized the material to make it more accessible.

New businesses in the area have changed along with the landscape and complexion of the people and the community. We would like to thank our

Publisher's Preface

business sponsors, those listed in Chapter 7 and in the back of the book with their business cards, for their generous support in helping to offset some of the expenses of producing and printing this updated edition to make it available to the community. We encourage you to share your thanks with them by supporting their businesses.

While the business environment in Nowthen has changed, there are other changes on the horizon as well. For many of us there could be a lurking absence of the name "Nowthen." It is no longer "on the map," the map of Minnesota. An interesting postal issue: In 1897, Nowthen was the name given to establish the post office. Burns could not be used then, because it was already in use in Minnesota. Now there is no longer a post office, and when Burns is used, businesses in Nowthen report that their shipments commonly end up in Burnsville, Minnesota. It may be time for some clarification...and the time to put Nowthen back on the map.

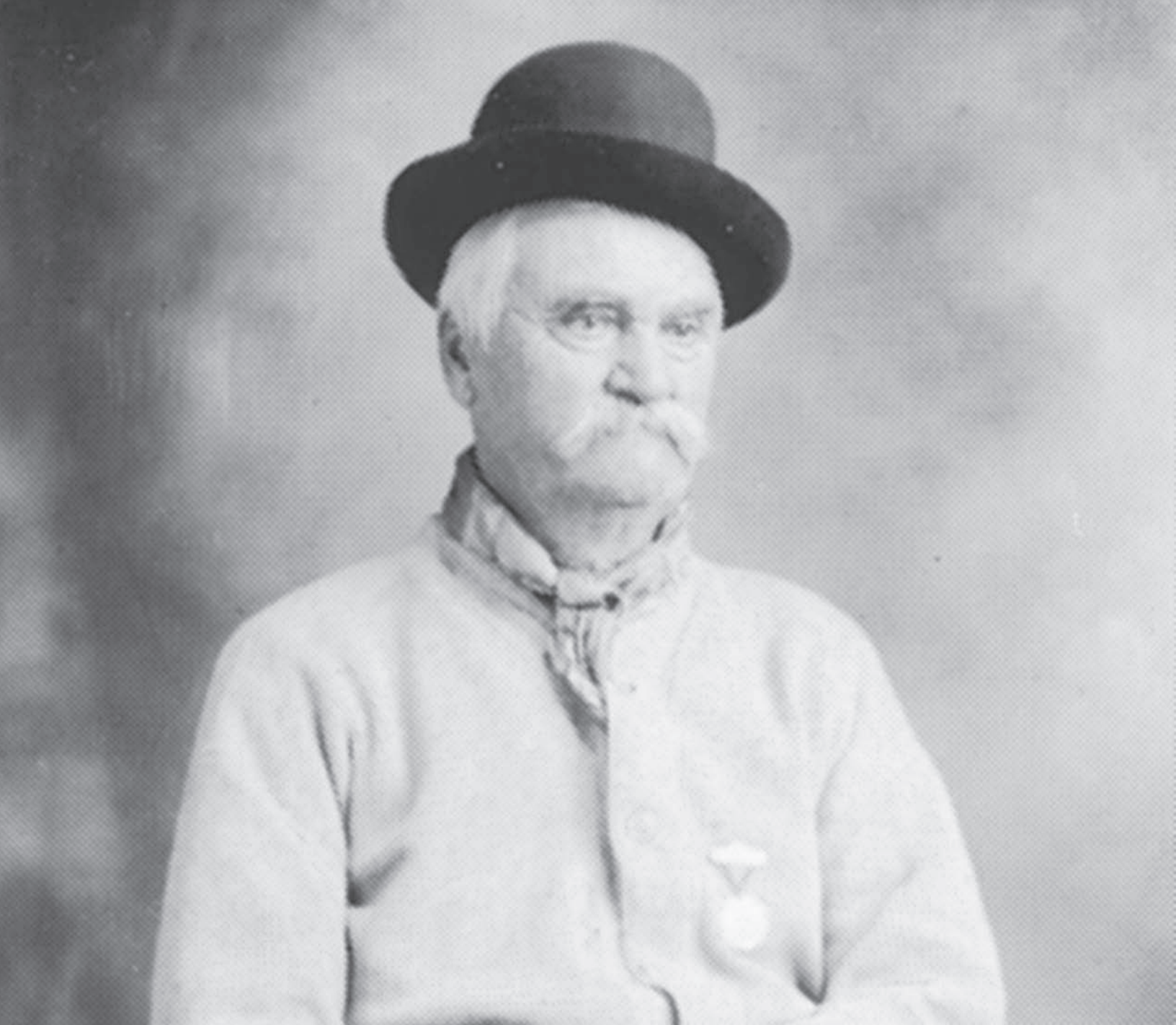
Nowthen, as we are in the 110th year, it seems a good time to update and expand the publication.

The area is still a township, but commerce and population has grown, and the presence of the Nowthen Threshing Show, open every August for one weekend, has enhanced the color of country life for all of us who live here, as well as for many who join us for the living history lesson of the Threshing Show.

It is with gratitude for Lou Paulson, who has continued to gather material in her interest in Nowthen lore, that I have encouraged this publication. My friend, Shane Groth, is at the helm of DeForest Press in this venture of Nowthen celebration. My other friend, Harlan Meyer, in generous spirit, has reached out in contacting members of the Nowthen business community.

As James Hare would say, "Nowthen, let's get to it."

Richard DeForest Erickson



James Hare

Chapter 1

James U. Hare was a Civil War veteran, the town's original postmaster, town clerk, and held many offices in the town board. He was a robust, energetic man, very well known to residents of Anoka County, and lived from 1841 to 1936.

He was also a bit of a character and was credited with naming the town "Nowthen." He wanted to reactivate his post office, but he needed a name for the postal service. He could not call it "Burns" because the name was already taken up north. He then submitted Hare's Corners, Gibbsville, and others, added the phrase "Nowthen" to the end of the letter, just as he did when he talked, and signed his name at the bottom of the page. The postal department thought it was one of the suggestions and chose the name "Nowthen." Hare really laughed when he got the news of the name the postal service accepted in the year 1897.

Here's what James Hare wrote about himself:

I was born February 18, 1841 in Schoharrie County, New York. I was the son of John Hare, born September 16, 1815, and mother Katharine Johnson of Sweden. My folks and Jim Hare had a pioneer life before arriving in Minnesota. In August 18, 1842, they went west to Walworth County in Wisconsin. In 1843 they moved to Jefferson, Wisconsin. In 1845 they started again and in Iowa got an ox team to come to the Mississippi River and could not ferry across because of too high wind. Steamer Green Slave came up and Charley DuWebber is to go above and go up to Saint Paul. We did and lived over Cathcarth Store and my dad cut cordwood in the winter. In March, we moved on the ice up the Minnesota River to Shakopee by Harvey D. J. Koo's. About 105 families of Sioux Indians and many of their dead on a kind of platform of poles, and some cross poles. The boxes made out of elm and some bark of trees and they were wrapped in white, red, and blue

wool blankets, the kind they wore for overcoats. We now arrived about 1849. There were no railroads at this time. At this time I am a ferryman or ferryboy for 7 or 8 years.



In 1861, Jim Hare enlisted in Company A of the 4th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry and also served several years helping to quell Indian outbreaks. He was discharged from service on March 18, 1863 by reason of a surgeon's certificate of disability.

In 1864, he went to Montana and was engaged in mining gold for two years. Claims were filed in 1865 and 1868 from Jefferson City and recorded, according to a Montana newspaper clipping. He came back to Minnesota after two years, but did not stay long as he went back to Montana for five years to work in mining and for a lumber yard. One of his good friends was Buffalo Bill Cody.

In a note he wrote the following: "Tom Holme's Idaho train will leave this place for the gold mines. Leading citizens from Shakopee – leaving for the unknown are L. M. Brown, H. J. Peck and Bro. James Hare and others. Success to each of you – send us a gold chunk or two."

TERRITORY OF MONTANA.
JEFFERSON COUNTY, RECORDER'S OFFICE.

Jefferson City, June 6 1865

I hereby certify, that James U. Hare
has recorded Claim No. Grounds East of from Discovery,
on the Uncle Sam Lode,
200 Feet, located in _____
Jefferson County. Recorded in Book 2, page 16
208 _____ County Recorder.

MONTANA POST PRINT.

Copy of gold receipt.

In 1870, Jim Hare came back to Burns Township and selected 365 acres of choice land in Section 20. His first marriage to Sarah was dissolved and he got custody of his daughter, Gertie Ann, born in 1873. On November 25, 1876, he married Matilda Johnson. She was born January 3, 1858, in Sweden.

His dad died in Burns on March 6, 1882, and his mother died April 8, 1876.

Hare birth dates:

*Gertie Ann
(Jan. 30, 1873)
John Ney
(Oct. 14, 1877)
Lee Wilbur
(June 4, 1880)
Alvin Lucky
(Sept. 15, 1882)
Frank Juno
(Oct. 29, 1886)
and Bert Volunteer
(Oct. 4, 1891).*



Family photo of James and Matilda Hare in 1905.

Jim Hare built a house that burned in 1885. He lived in Anoka while he built another house.

On the farm, he moved the old 1870 schoolhouse of District 27 up on the hill across from the farm. It also served as the Methodist Church. He was very active in this movement also.

Though Hare was not the first settler in Burns Township, he was the most important. As people came and admired the location, he sold pieces of his land to them and hence the community grew. He later lived in a huge house across from the old store in Nowthen. I can remember the color was rust orange. Jim Hare died on October 14, 1936, over 95 years old.

We thank you, Jim Hare, as we remember and celebrate the naming of Nowthen.

James Hare

“Nowthen”

A Reflection by Richard DeForest Erickson

I’m always fascinated by speech and speech patterns. The Kennedy politicians commonly used a “filler” in their statements: “Ah...ah...ah.” I remember a man who always punctuated his sentences with, “You know?” Or another phrase, common to some Canadians, “Eh?”

“Eh?” Do you want to add to the list?

“Don’t cha know?”

“Okay?”

“I mean...”

“For sure.”

“Ya see?”

The father of the name Nowthen could have been a character to know. James Hare was much more than talk: entrepreneur, postmaster, Indian fighter, soldier, gold hunter, inventor, administrator.

He covered a lot of territory and a lot of activity. While that “filler” in his common speech may have been a habit or a quirk, I’m glad that that simple trait left us a continued legacy of a complex man.

“Nowthen.” Enough said!