



READY FOR VOTERS — The pot-bellied stove in the Perry Town Hall is fired up and the ballot boxes are in place as town election officials wait for voters.

The officials, from left, are Milo Grundahl, town clerk; Joe Sutter; Morgan Berg; Albert Daley, town president; Reuben Grindner; and Tommie Anderson.

After 100 Years

Only Names Changed in Perry Elections

By ROBERT JOSLYN
(Of The State Journal Staff)

DALEYVILLE — The election of 1968 in the Town of Perry is going to be a lot like the election of 1868.

In fact, about the only difference will be voters arriving by automobile instead of horse and buggy, and electric lights instead of kerosene lamps.

THE TOWN of Perry in southwestern Dane County is a scenic, hilly countryside populated by nearly 800 persons of Norwegian and German descent. The people farm and keep their buildings and grounds neat.

The Norwegians, comprising about three-fourths of the town's population, attend the Perry Lutheran Church in Daleyville. The congregation is an active one and is now on its third church building. Their original Congregation, Hauge Lutheran Church, was the

first Norwegian Lutheran Church west of Madison.

The Germans are Catholic and they belong to the Holy Redeemer Parish which is located on a high scenic hill just off Spring Valley Rd.

THEY ALL vote in an historic old town hall on Highway A that has been changed little since it was built.

At 8 a.m. on Nov. 5, the first of seven election officials will arrive at the hall and fire up the old, rusted pot-bellied stove on which is proudly inscribed "The Original Detroit Stoves."

"By the time we're ready to vote, she'll blow you right out of there," said Albert J. Daley, who has been the town president for 41 years.

After the stove is fired, the shutters will be flung open.

The flies and wasps that have collected on the wide window sill voting booths will be swept off and the early bird voters will be lounging around waiting for the official 9 a.m. opening of the polls.

In fact, the outhouse is one of the main reasons the election board here is composed only of men.

"I'D LIKE to ask the women," Daley said, "but we just can't provide them with the facilities."

Though the old town hall isn't used much nowadays, it used to be the scene of some lively meetings. About 30 to 40 years ago, there was discussion on which roads should be blacktopped first. "Boy, did they come," said Daley.

When the 14 wooden benches in the hall were filled and the standing room all taken, "they stood outside and looked in the windows."

Voting was an all-day affair for some. Milo Grundahl, town clerk since 1955, said his father used to come to vote and then stay for the town meeting while his family looked after the chores.

If 150 PERSONS vote, Daley might term it a "fair election."

"Some of them come early and then it slacks off until after dinner," he explained. "It's quiet from 3 to 4, and some who work come from 5 to 6. We hardly have any from 6 to 8."

The old town hall was built so long ago there is no record of the exact date.

Minutes of the 1854 town board, the earliest available and written in an ornate cursive style, reads:

"AT THE SAID meeting it was ordered and determined that a tax should be raised in said Town of Perry, \$75 for school purposes, \$100 to defray town expenses, and \$50 for support of the poor."

But there was no mention of the town hall.

Since the only use of the town hall is for voting, the board has never felt it necessary to modernize it.

Sun-faded calico curtains will provide the backdrops for voters. A cornfield on a hill and the rickety outhouse will provide the scenery.

VOTERS CAME by horse and buggy, and that wasn't always easy. "I can remember coming to vote when mud was so deep you couldn't get through," recalled Daley.

Grundahl recalled how a bad storm came during one April election. "the wainscoting rippled up and down and here we sat like a bunch of sitting ducks."

One storm about 15 years ago was so bad it blew the building right off the foundation. "When they pushed her back on, she wasn't very plumb," Daley said. Two cross braces at the back now keep the building steady.

THE ELECTRIC lights were installed about 1958. Until then, the electricity came from an extension cord strung from a nearby cheese factory. A single bare bulb hanging from the stovepipe provided the light. Until the late 1940s, light came from kerosene lamps.

The kerosene lamps are gone, but the atmosphere remains. Once again on Nov. 5, the wide plank floor will echo under the heels of work shoes as the Town of Perry voters swarm their hands above the stove and then step back to cast their ballots.