

Transportation

Baltic or Newfolden?

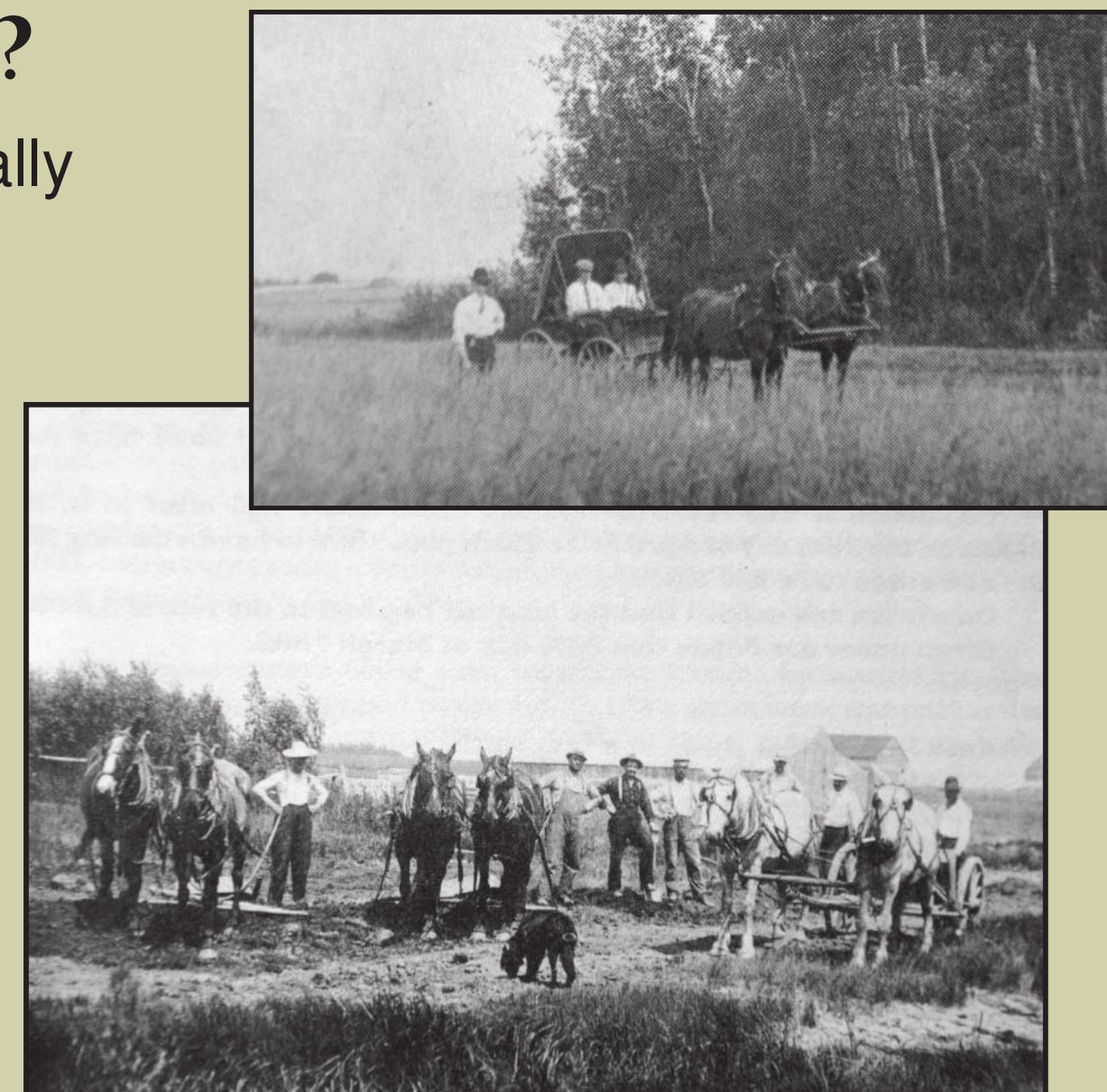
The Soo Line Railroad officially named most of its town sites. Originally Newfolden was to be named *Baltic*, after the Baltic grain elevators that were commonly built along the Soo Line. The name was rejected by the Scandinavian community and the town officially became *Newfolden*, but the township kept the two word name, New Folden.

Newfolden was founded in 1904. The city has a total population of 368. It is located along the Middle River and north of Thief River Falls on US Highway 59.

The railroad was a major influence to the town in the early 1900s. It promised an easier way to transport grain to larger markets. The Soo Line purchased land from Olaus (Oliver) Larson. Most of the land was very wet, and he only had a few acres in farmland. He was eager to sell his entire 160-acre homestead to The Minnesota Loan & Trust Company on September 7, 1904 for \$4800. Olaus Larson then purchased the homestead of Andrew Holden who wanted to leave the area. The result for Larson was a better farm, and a considerable amount of cash. Another 40 acres was purchased from Lewis Ekman. This completed the 200-acre plot for the townsite.



An early school bus. A small stove heated the interior during the cold Minnesota winters.



Above: A typical mode of transportation in the 1800s. Below: A road building crew in New Folden Township. Circa 1890s.

The Railroad is Coming!

The *Winnipeg Line* brought mail and supplies to the frontier and the trail officials decided that a railroad station would be built every eight miles. When the Soo Line staked out its route through New Folden Township in 1903, the right-of-way passed within 330' of the small village of New Folden. This was a logical place to establish a depot, and was the second Soo station built north of Thief River Falls.

The settlement was in the center of New Folden Township, had a post office and store and was a central meeting place for area residents. Unfortunately Soo officials determined that the depot would be located two miles north of New Folden in a wooded area along the Middle River. This scenic location had a natural water boundary on three sides, and was crossed by a graded section of road where bridges had already been constructed. The Soo's decision provided a bit of controversy, but the settlers had little to say in the matter. The river and woods did provide a more attractive spot for the village than the open prairie site.

In the summer of 1904 railroad construction crews reached the Newfolden area. That year was particularly rainy, and progress was slow. A special crew was assigned to build a bridge across the Middle River. Another crew erected the telegraph line. Finally came the track laying crew, who laid an average distance of two-and-one-half miles of track per day.

With the onslaught of workers coming to isolated areas where there were no accommodations, workers often camped out in the open, in railroad cars, or sometimes in the barns of nearby settlers. The railroad cook often used neighboring farm houses to prepare food.

On November 21, 1904, the Soo Line passenger train passed through Newfolden for the first time. The steam powered train ran between St. Paul and Winnipeg, delivering mail and easing some of the isolation of the homesteaders.

Left: The Soo Line Railroad route passed by Inland New Folden, but the railroad officials decided to build the depot near the Middle River, so the town site was moved to its present location. Right: The new depot, built by the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Sault Ste. Marie Railroad. Circa 1904.

