Lake named for Nebraska native
By Dr. James D. Henderson

Over a century ago land around Pelican Lake was being developed for tourists. Folks from Lincoln, Nebraska were early settlers on what is now known as Lincoln Point. The group was known as the Pelican Lake Outing Club. Others from Nebraska acquired land around the Lake as well. One of these men was Clark J. Stevens from the town of Ansley in Custer County. In 1906 Stevens built a cabin on the southeast shore of Pelican Lake on a point of land that became known as Stevens’ Point. The point is identified on an early 1920s Pelican Lake map found in the Frederick Haeberle cabin after his property was sold to its present owners. Other features marked on this map show a small lake between Pelican Lake and Markee Lake now known as Stevens Lake and a platted parcel of land on the south shore called Stevens Park.

As early maps were drawn, locally named features found their way onto these maps. Today the Minnesota DNR has very specific guidelines on naming geologic features on and around lakes and streams.

Not every one gets to have a lake named for them. Once a small bay in the southeast corner of Pelican Lake, the development of a sandspit slowly closed off and isolated the body of water that became Stevens Lake. It was probably already a lake by the time Stevens built his cabin on the point in 1906. At about the same time Stevens acquired 250 acres of land on the southern shore of Pelican Lake, a portion of which he platted in August 1912 into 12 lots and named Stevens Park.

The plat description indicates that C. J. Stevens and his wife Jennie H. Stevens were from Custer County, Nebraska. A detailed biographical sketch of Clark Stevens appears in Gaston and Humphrey’s History of Custer County, Nebraska in 1919. Stevens was a merchant, banker, miller, and farmer. He was raised in a wealthy family in New York State. He came to Ansley in 1886 and was the town’s first banker. Retiring from the banking business in 1902 he established the largest mercantile store in Ansley. He built the first telephone company and electric light company in the town and own two large farms in the area. Clearly Clark Stevens was not a poor man. It appears that after his second marriage to Jennie H. Green in 1900 they acquired land around Pelican Lake. Perhaps they knew of the availability of property in the area through possible friends or business contacts in Lincoln.

The couple met an untimely death on April 26, 1930 near Wichita, Kansas in an automobile accident while on a trip from their winter home in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Today Stevens Point, Stevens Lake and his south shore lots all have fine lake homes built on them. Few people are likely aware the man who made it all possible was a Cornhusker from Custer County.