

Martin and Helene Engen, Charter Members of East Norway lake Lutheran Church

A good starting point is found in a venerable church history book¹:

Martin H. Engen, from N. Land. He came to Allamukee County, Iowa in 1865; to Norway Lake in 1866. He married Helene Christiansdatter Skindeliën.

Following is a shortened version of a paragraph in *Boka om Land*², concerning emigration in 1858:

"...Martin Hansen Engen, born 1838 at Bjerkeengen in Torpa. His brothers Kristoffer and Andreas had emigrated in 1857. He was married to Helene, daughter of Kristian Mikkelsen Sæther and Marit Skindeleïn. He couple settled in 1866 at Norway Lake, Minnesota, where Martin died in 1918. They had six children....

Norwegian church records from Land Parish, Oppland County³ show that Martin was born January 8 1838 to Hans Hansen and Olava Hovelsdatter Bjerke (farm name not quite readable). In the same book⁴, we find Helene, born 15 October 1846 to unreadable Mikkelsen and Mari Pedersdatter Skindeliën.

Exit records⁵ from Torpa, Land, Oppland have Martin Hans.... Bjerke.... leaving that church to go to North America on March 29, 1858.

Evidently, Martin returned to Norway to marry Helene. This marriage is recorded in the books of Nordre Land Parish⁶. The date was 4 Dec 1864 and the church was Aamot. Their ages were 26¾ and 18, respectively. Their places of residence were Bjerke... and Skindeliën, respectively. Their fathers were Hans Hansen and Christian M...., respectively. Their son Hans was born⁷ 15 March 1865 in Nordre Land Parish. Their residence at the time was Stubberud.

Martin Hansen, Helene, and Hans Martinsen are among the passengers⁸ on steamship Balder which left Liverpool on June 27 and arrived Quebec on July 7. Their ages: 27, 27 and infant, respectively. (Helene's age is obviously incorrect.)

The 1880 census of Arctander Township, Kandiyohi County has: Martin Engen, age 42; Helene, 34; Hans, 16; Christian, 13; Maria, 9; Andreas, 7; Samuel, 3. Martin, Helene, and Hans were Norwegian-born, all other Minnesota.

The 1900 census of the same place shows that Martin was born January 1838. Others in the household are Helene, born October 1846; Andreas, March 1873; Sam Mikkell, July 1876; Casper R., May 1882; Olive M., October 1887. The parents have been married 34 years and Helene is the mother of 7 children, all living.

Martin, Helene K, and Hans arrived⁹ in the Norway Lake settlement in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota in July of 1866. Imagine doing all that travel by sail ship, train and ox cart with a baby! Helene must also have been pregnant with Christian during this ox cart trip from Iowa to Norway Lake. Christian Engen was born in Minnesota in October 1866.

Martin homesteaded a claim on Sections 11 and 12 of Arctander Township, where he and Helene farmed the remainder of their lives. According to his granddaughter Nella Peterson Swenson, Martin was a taylor in Norway and not skilled or very interested in farm work. Her grandmother Helene, who was a strong woman, did much of the farm work herself.

The 1900 Arctander township census reports that M.H. could read, write and speak English and that he owned his land, but it was mortgaged. Martin was active in his rural community. He was one of the original incorporators of the Arctander mutual fire insurance association, and served as Trustee of the Norway Lake Creamery (1896-1905).

Martin and Helene sold the farm to their second youngest son Mikkal and his wife Clara in 19__ when they retired, with provision for Martin and Helene for the remainder of their lives. The 1920 census shows the 73-year-old widow Helene living on the farm with her 37-year-old son Casper and a hired man Olaf Larson. Helene outlived both sons Mikkal and Casper, so it was Mikkal's children Melvin and Miriam Engen who took care of both the farm and grandma the last few years of her life. The 1930 census shows Helena living with her daughter-in-law Clara, two grandchildren Melvin (age 24) and Miriam (age 10), and the hired man Edwin Peterson.

Martin and Helene are buried in the East Norway Lake Lutheran Church cemetery. Their markers read:

Martin H. Engen, Jan. 8 1838, Dec. 5 1818; Helen K. Engen, Oct. 15 1846, Jun. 24, 1936.

Report prepared by Earl O. Knutson with help as shown in footnote 9. August 2019.

1 *Festskrift - En Fremstilling at det Kirkelige Arbeide Norway Lake fra 1862-1916.* Ved Pastorene Mons Sotendahl og N.J. Njus. Translation by Edna Rude, published by Peter C. Gandrud, Bemidji, MNy

2 *Boka om Land IV*, by Arvid Sandaker, Translated by Sandra Hendrickson. Landingslag I Amerika, 2010. page 159

3 <https://media.digitalarkivet.no/view/9359/64>

4 <https://media.digitalarkivet.no/view/9359/129>

5 <https://media.digitalarkivet.no/view/8980/168>

6 <https://media.digitalarkivet.no/view/8981/151>

7 <https://media.digitalarkivet.no/view/8981/42>

8 http://www.norwayheritage.com/p_list.asp?jo=2249&ps=22327

9 This paragraph and the following three are taken, with some shortening, from a writing by By Nella Peterson Swenson, Marlin Henjum and Pat Lindgren; contact: