

## Helge Espelien and Ragnhild Espelien, Charter Members of East Norway Lake Lutheran Church

Information is scarce on this couple. We start with these reports of death, found in a county history book<sup>1</sup> in the chapter about Norway Lake Township in Kandiyohi County:

- Ragnild Espelien, 85 years, 1898
- Helge (Espelien) Knudson, 1899, 86 years

An Ancestry.com post<sup>2</sup> indicates that both Helge and Ragnhild were born on the Fyran farm in Krødsherad, Buskerud, Norway. This is probably true, as Norwegian church records from Krødsherad Sokn, Sigdal Prestegjeld, Buskerud, Norway<sup>3</sup> attest that Helge Knudsen Fyrandeiet and Ragnhild Pedersdatter Amundsrud were married there on 20 May 1836 in. Both were age 24. The fathers were Knud Bensen and Peder Andreasen, respectively. A son, Peder, was born<sup>4</sup> 2 March 1839 in Krødsherad Sokn.

There is a Helge Knudson (age 40, very likely the same Helge) on board<sup>5</sup> the brig Victoria in 1852. Victoria departed Christiania August 25 and arrived New York October 9. On the next line is Knud Knudson (15), possibly related.

In the hard-to-read 1870 census<sup>6</sup> of Norway Lake Township, Monongalia County, there is a Helge Knutson (age 60?, born Norway). In the same household: Ragnil (58, born Norway) and Anders (16, born Wisconsin). Also, there is a Helge Knudson in the non-population (agricultural) census of the same location and year.

In the 1875 census, Helge K. Espelien (63, born in Norway) resided in "New London<sup>7</sup>," Kandiyohi County. In the same household there are Ragnhild (60, born in Norway). In the adjacent household there are Anders H. Espelien (age 21, born in Illinois), Birgitta Espelien (27, born in Norway) and Martha (1, born in Minnesota).

There is an Helge Knudsen (age 73 ) with an Raenil Knudsen (73) in the 1985 census of Norway Lake Township, Kandiyohi County.

Many mysteries remain. The burial sites were not discovered. Most puzzling is the name Espelien. There is perhaps a connection to the Espelien farms, but no connection could be documented. (Fyrand is in Buskerud County, Espelien is about 50 miles straight north in Oppland County.)

Report prepared by Earl O. Knutson, October 2018

- 1 Illustrated History of Kandiyohi County, 1905, pages 338 and 343.
- 2 Postings on Ancestry.com, particularly that of cuatro1947, have been very helpful in drawing this account together. Many names and places are mentioned. Two other children are named. However (for the most part) only those that could be verified by finding the primary records have been included here.
- 3 <https://media.digitalarkivet.no/view/1103/7041/9>
- 4 <https://media.digitalarkivet.no/view/1103/40>
- 5 Norwayheritage.com
- 6 US and MN census records were viewed using ancestry.com.
- 7 Careful reading of the handwritten census record will show that the township is Norway Lake, not New London.