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OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES.

By Gabriel Stene

Willmar Tribune July 29, 1925

The Norwegians have now been on exhibition sky high for some time and the echo is still on the roar. Being a Norwegian myself, I have been feeling like growing six inches in my own estimation. One day at the Minnesota State Fair grounds I was informed that 65,000 people had passed thru the gates at 10:30 and still coming. I then began to wonder if the Minnesota State fair grounds were in United States or if the United States were on the Minnesota State Fair grounds. The slogan is: "Hats off for the Norwegians." But what's the matter with the Swedes and the Danes? They are also of the same stock. Let us not in the flurry leave them behind, but keep pace with them.

Allow me a review of some early pioneering. A child reasons like a child. I once was a little boy with a big puzzle confronting me. What kind of a makeup are the Swedes? Are they white, something like us Norwegians? Back east where we lived, where I was born and raised, were no Swedes. Never saw one, never came in contact with any, but heard of them in a roundabout way connected with some clash between the Norwegians and the Swedes some time way back in the old moss grown forgotten times. I had heard about the frontier life and struggles, Indian massacres, etc., and had it fixed in my mind that the Swedes were a tribe something like the Indians.

Allow me to present the picture of the first person giving me the first impression of the real Swede. It thrills me yet and I shall never forget October, 28th, 1867, when a caravan composed of two families, three covered wagons drawn by oxen, a bunch of cattle, a flock of sheep and a blessing of kids, myself included, slowly heading for a little lumber shack on the wild prairie with not a bush or a twig to indicate trees, on the northwest corner of Sec. 20 Lake Andrew. It was built that same summer from rough lumber. The home of H.W. Mankel was our destination. Lumber was not then available, nearer than St. Cloud. Out on the prairie, long before reaching their home, we were met by a lady with a smiling and sunny disposition, heartily greeting us and welcoming us to Norway Lake. She asked how long we had been on the road. The answer was three weeks. Her eyes then moved in tears. It was her style and makeup. She was all sympathy. Introducing herself as Mrs. H.W. Mankel she, was a genuine Swede. We were escorted to the shack. Pioneer Mankel became busy throwing out hay for our hungry stock. This was a rare treat to them as the prairie we had come over was scorched black by prairie fires. Mrs. Mankel was a busy getting acquainted. A little girl, Jennie, their eldest daughter, (my age, now Mrs. A.H. Gordhammer,) was managing the stove. There was to be a real welcoming feast. And it was, in the fullest sense of the word. Six grown persons and a bunch of kids of 15, theirs included, marked the gay party. Mrs. Mankel was the leading spirit, not only that day or a few days or 50 days. But for 50 years. She was the same unchangeable good natured and good neighborly Mrs. Mankel. A good sister, wife, mother, grandmother and mother-in-law! Missed when her place was left vacant.

It thrills me yet to hear the names Stockholm and Goteborg, Sweden, mentioned. From the way she pictured them I had it fixed in my mind that it must have been there where old Adam and Eve were courting and pioneering.

Now add the whole Lake Florida colony of Swedes, all of the same caliber and good neighbors. I soon arrived at the conclusion that this would be a miserable lonesome country if it was not for the Swedes. There was a complete reverse in the Swedish theory of mine. The Danes never mixed with us at Norway Lake but they hold their third faction of the Scandinavians with honor and respect. The Scandinavian nation reflects greatly upon the rest of the world. Long live the Scandinavian nation! In making a roll call there is a quiet sadness. Where are all those pioneers, good neighborly Swedes? I wend my way to the Lake Florida Swedish Mission church and there I find the names missing and so familiar to me. The old Swedish pioneers are at rest. The granite blocks with their names carved into them so declare. Among others I read on the granite slabs: H. W. Mankel, 1836-1899; Mrs. H.W. Mankel, 1832-1914; her sister Mathilda, 1841-1914, and following names of the early pioneers: Johan Nord, Benson, Nordins, Hokanson, Hedin, Norman, Bratlund. Nicholas Bloom. Warholm, Axel Hedin (California). P.A. Odell, Eliasson, Nygren, Schodin, Danielson, Monson, Lars Hedin, John Lungstrom, Skoglunds, Rodlunds, Sundquist, Larson, Knutson, Erickson, Nyman, Ole Johnson—all of the Lake Florida Mission church.

A better bunch of Swedish neighbors could never be selected but at roll call now they are silent.

Sorry not to have the picture of Pioneer Mankel but shall relate how nicely we got along in 1868.

PIONEER KID

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August 12, 1925 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE RENINISCENSES

STRIKING A HORNETS NEST

I will conclude my former article by saying the intention is not to belittle any special nationality with the borders of the United States. Neither is it the intention to give Scandinavian nations any preference to any other nation. But to follow the trail blazed by their forefathers and prove that they are chips from the old block. In this our United State we are not a certain special nation. We are all United States, supported and protected equally under the Star Spangled Banner, the Stars and Stripes. The most beautiful emblem ever planted anywhere on the globe. A nation that well may challenge any flag in the world because our emblem never saw defeat and hope it never shall.

Now, back to the early pioneer days of the fifties and the sixties. [1850's and 1860's] The early sturdy toiling and sweating pioneers did not come in on bus lines, automobiles, sedans or any other glass houses equipped with modern steering apparatus. Their steering apparatus was a long whip. Their sedan was an old wagon with over made out of madras ticking and their motor was a yoke of oxen,

commonly known in

English a oxmobile and in Norwegian, naute-mobile, (kjore me naut). No lumber available nearer than St. Cloud, 60 miles. The pioneer lived in sod houses, dugouts in the hillside, small lumber shacks and log cabins.

Anyone having opportunity to visit Gunder Swenson's can see the only log cabin left in the country which dates back to 1858. Great wonder it was saved from the Indian's fury and escaped being burned by the savages like all the rest. But riddled by Indian bullets, it stands yet on its original place and tells its own story. If I had things my way it would soon be on its move to the Minnesota State Fair grounds to be preserved and kept as one of the most precious relics from the pioneers' struggles and Indian massacres and ravages.

The first essential thing for the pioneers success was equipment of a good breaking plow to be turning the virgin soil upside down and aiding and helping each other, settlers being few and far between. Good friendly neighbors for ten miles around visited and received visits. Their houses were narrow, the walls rough and the sod roofs laid low. But nevertheless they were "Home, Sweet Home," and satisfaction and good neighborly friendship was the prevailing element, and the oxen were the power of industry.

In 1868 a breaking company was being formed, the job being assigned to Mr. Mankell and myself. Altho a lad of only 12, I was an expert in handling oxen, so they said. I was to handle the four oxen and Mr. Mankell the plow. I found Mr. Mankell an exceptionally good partner, with a peculiar way of touching the chord which so pleasantly pleased the inquisitive youth. Straight and honest in his dealings, strict on principle and discipline and rather inclined to go the limit. He was a lover of his smoke, always carrying his pipe and wanted, as he termed it, "a pipe minute" now and then. One day at noon he had lost his pipe, but had, as he said, a parlor ornament, a porcelain pipe presented him by a friend and which was not on the market for many dollars, but now it had to be used. He took it along out on the prairie. Those days we frequently found nest of wasps or bumble bees which were very annoying. The first round we turned one of those undesirables without knowing it, but found it out in due time. At the second round he wanted that "pipe minute," filled his precious pipe, gave me a one-eyed wink and smile to testify to his pride. I had the oxen just started when they all four of them stuck their tails straight up and unanimously decided on a spin of their own, having walked right into the indignant swarm of hornets. Having only the whip in my hands, no halter, no lines, I was helpless. The oxen ran away, the plow followed the oxen, Mankell followed the plow, the plow struck a stone, and the plow handle smashed his pipe, and Mankell went head first right into the nest of the enemies which were swarming around him by the dozen. He was just about uttering something about reckless driving when he all of a sudden went into a fighting mood. Hat in one hand and arms swinging like the wings of a windmill, he did not stop to consider road laid out by town supervisors or paved and graveled roads, but like the oxen took a spin of his won at the rate of about 20 miles an hour. I knew it was impolite to laugh at older people especially in so critical a moment, but got a silly spell and laughed until I was rolling on the ground, Mankell coming back laughing himself, I felt more free for an other good laugh. No more breaking that afternoon as he was nursing a double face, in other words, a face swollen beyond recognition, and had to take hold of eyelids with both hands to open up to see the difference between day and night.

Will continue to narrate the co-operation of four neighbors during summer of 1868, the first co-operation known in the vicinity.

PIONEER KID

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August 19, 1925 Willmar Tribune

CO-OPERATION OF PIONEERS

Co-operation is very essential to good farming, as well as everything else, and should be practiced more. Good neighborhoods with good, kind neighbors is the noblest and best gift ever bestowed upon mankind. Better live amongst uncivilized heathen and wild Indians than among mean neighbors of the would-be civilized type.

Early pioneers in these parts never knew of such thing as wrangles and quarrels. 'They were all of a uniform type, one not feeling any bigger than the other. Helping and accommodating each other was the daily slogan. In 1868 four neighbors, having about 5 acres each in wheat, agreed to co-operate thru the summer. They decided to stack it all in one setting to make it handier at threshing time. And the place decided upon was that of H. W. Mankel. He had a yoke of oxen and one cow. Following the trail in the knee high grass over the prairie east we found a Varmland home, that of Nels Brattlund, now the home of Martin Reiersen. The Brattlund family was one of the finest families that ever crossed the limits of Kandiyohi county. Caroline, their oldest daughter, was the well-known Mrs. C.C. Selvig of Willmar, Sophia, the next oldest was our school teacher at the age of 16. She taught in a little log house erected near the S.W. corner of Sec. 20, Dist. 25, which she held down for 2 terms. The floor was made from common rough unplanned lumber with knot holes in it through which the gophers played "hide and go seek," and raised the dickens with our dinner pails. Home-made desks and table made by Pioneer Mankel. The log walls were rough and rude, the sod roof laid low but it harbored one of the happiest bunch of school children west of St. Anthony Falls (the name Minneapolis was not known then.) There was some talk about a railroad to strike thru the wilderness west but where and when was a guess. We soon heard of the Foot Lake station, now the city of Willmar. Our teacher was young and small for her age but sharp as a thistle. Woe unto them who did not obey the rules of her school. She became the well and favorable known Mrs. Sophia L. Rice of Willmar. The homesteader on what is best known as the Slattum place was Christian Bjornstad. He had a yoke of oxen and one cow. He was of a very slow and easy going disposition. He never laced his shoes and as a consequence put the two natural heels and the two shoe heels side by side. He lived in a dugout on the side hill. He had a Scotch wife and she was a hustler. Bjornstad had never learned the art of milking. When the wife was sick and not able to go out he led the cow into the house and backed her up to the bed to be milked by the wife from the bed. There was no risk of stepping thru the floor, it being Mother Earth's clay floor. He had the misfortune of losing one of his oxen. Then he hitched the cow with the remaining ox. Not being the owner of a wagon he hitched the cow and the ox to a sleigh, put on a jag of bundles and hauled it to the stacking place at Mankell's. He complained of dry sleighing. The Bjornstad's moved to Montana fifty years ago where they

both died. The setting at Mankell's from the four farms was completed in fine neighborly shape however.

The first little horsepower threshing machine was brot into this vicinity by Even Railson, best know as Stor-Even, on account of his giant build and corresponding strength. He bot it in St. Paul, took it by horses to Rice county by team to Norway Lake in Monongalia county [the northern ½ of present Kandiyohi County] . Jacob E. Ramstad and J. Axel Hedin were his helpers.

“Oh! See, mother, look! There comes the threshing machine!” A fine building on wheels, nicely painted it was. Belts on both sides twisted or straight. And a bunch of pioneer kids with eyes wide open lost no chance to look Stor-Even was standing on front of the machine, erect as General Pershing, driving two teams, and aiming for the co-operative setting at Mankell's. Next comes what was known as the truck wagon with all supplies for a well equipped threshing machine. Next the horse power hanging hoisted up under a wagon.

PIONEER KID.

(Continued.)

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August 26, 1925

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

THRESHING FIFTY-SEVEN YRS. AGO

The horse power not being mounted on wheels, the wagon was lengthened about double its ordinary length with a strong rack to hold it up just enough to clear the ground. Separator was left between the stacks. The boss was as busy as the chief of the Willmar Fire department while in action, setting the separator by the aid of a little pocket level about four inches long. Two newcomers were busy hanging the straw stacker, one end on separator, the other end on two legs. Raising and lowering was done by spreading or putting together lower end of legs to suit. Tumbling rods were laid out. The boss stepped up behind the side gear, closed the left eye, put all strength to right eye to see if tumbling rods were being laid out straight. The horse power was then put in position, staked and chained. Five sweeps were put in place for five teams hitched up around power. A neighbor youngster, just out of his teens by the name of Gunder Swenson, was taking instructions in handling the two red half bushels, sacks and tally plugs. A piece of board fastened on separator with three rows of holes, 10 holes in each row. When half bushel was full the plug was put in upper hole, and moved down one hole for each one until it got to bottom hole, that meant 5 bushels. Then the 50 bushel plug in upper hole third row, carried to bottom, meant 500 bushels. This was the threshers tally rules those days. No granaries. Cribs were made out of fence rails. Layer of rails 12 ft square on the ground, then all four sides built up by rails with a layer of long slough grass on bottom and each rail bent to hang down inside and outside, then covered up with hay like a hay stack. Wonderfully how well those cribs kept when made right. The two oldest girls, Jennie

and Mary, were dispatched in to help mother, particularly to look after a clothes basket stowed away in a corner. The basket contained a bundle and the bundle contained a four-month old baby boy duly initiated into the mystery of pioneering with password and name like other good citizens and today goes under the name of Oscar Mankell. The two newcomers were ordered to put their clay pipes away which they laid on top of fence posts. Albert Hedin was ordered to handle bundles to bandcutter. But Albert had given the job to his cousin Axel Erickson, which caused a little flurry as we both considered it a job something like the vice presidency of the United States. We were both 12 years. The boss gave my opponent a job to hold up sacks for Gunder Swenson, the measurer. The boss took the feeding stand. One climbed upon the horse power with five teams around him, swinging a long whip. The boss got hold of a couple cylinder teeth to give the machine a start as horses were moving at about 4 inches to the step to begin with until the machine got speeded up in full motion. The man on the horse power doubled and twisted his lips. There was some whistling and "git-uping," and the thing was in full run. Threshing one stack at the time to give each owner his dues. All grain had to be carried to the cribs on the shoulder. It was quite amusing to see Kristian Bjornstad with open shoes full of grain carrying and sliding back and forth. The picture of that outfit on a moving film, Bjornstad's four heels included, would today be worth one thousand dollars. Movies pay a thousand dollars for less than that, as long as it is something odd.

This article is not intended for those who have had experience in horse power threshing, but for the growing generation of today who have no idea of pioneer struggles. All the grain was carried on shoulders both downstairs and upstairs after they got granaries built. They did not sit and whistle or smoke cigarettes while the grain is elevated up by an elevator. The straw pile was divided between the four different owners in a brotherly way.

PIONEER KID.

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September 2, 1925

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

THE SOLDIERS' PATROL TRAIL

I noticed the West Norway Lake scribe was spinning his cap, so I braced up for another dive. I am dreaming, yes, I am dreaming of you good old pioneer days with your friendliness, good neighborly friendship and tolerance. And I say sometimes to myself, Come again, good old pioneer days, come again! Your houses were cheap, small and low, but the inhabitants had hearts as big as an ox' heart. I have seen more scramble now over hiring a teacher for a short term of seven months, than in the pioneer days of electing a United States president for a term of four years.

In the early pioneer days there was only one road which you might call a main road thru this wild west wilderness. That of the government soldiers' patrol road running out from the eastern part of the state, along south of Eagle Lake, south of Long Lake, then west a couple miles to just where the Solomon Lake

church now stands. Then on north side of Solomon Lake to the pioneer home of Lars Endresen Rosseland, living half ways between the Eagle Lake and the Norway Lake colonies who together with one son was killed by the Indians. His wife, the Hardanger heroine, Mrs. Guri Endresen, hid with her nursing babe under a door. Besides her wounded son, she was the eye witness of the tying of her two daughters on the Indian ponies to carry them away with little hopes of ever seeing them any more. But the girls used their mother language and Hardanger grit to the effect that the ponies went for the brush where the girls tore themselves loose and strayed till they were picked up by some scouting party way east and were taken where they again met their mother after three days of adventures. Meanwhile the heroine escaped the Indians, taking care of her nursing child and the wounded, both of her own family, and others in a way which might cause the envy of a war general. If you ever met Mrs. Per Alvig of Solomon Lake you will face the nursing child hid under the cellar door at the fatal moment when her papa and a brother were massacred by the Indians. (Told by the old lady herself in 1868.) The road then ran in a northwesterly direction over the wild prairie, crossing Shakopee creek on a log bridge built by the government, just below the home residence of Gunder Pederson in Town of Mamre. Then north to the old Norway Lake Fort and on to Six Mile Grove, Swift county, and Fort Abercrombie. The historical spot of the Norway Lake Fort is I think on Sec . 36, Township of Norway Lake. I took a trip over there recently and the trenches show yet. I felt like lifting my hat and saluting. I walked the trenches and viewed the location and said to myself; Those who established the Fort here under the administration of Abraham Lincoln, certainly knew what they were about. What a beautiful panorama and scenery, that of Norway Lake to the East, bordered and lined with that magnificent timber and other fine scenery all around. The Township of Norway Lake should take pride in securing an acre of that precious spot, re-open the trenches patrolled by our faithful soldiers at the Abraham Lincoln times in the early sixties. County commissioners and even State Legislatures should come to the aid to give the respectable pioneer fort of Norway Lake its due honors and respect.

After St. Cloud had been made the railroad terminal, there was also a continual immigration drive over the St. Cloud-Norway Lake road, where the majority of the old sturdy pioneers of Norway Lake via Paynesville, moved along in strings in covered wagons, myself included, drawn by the faithful ox. The old sturdy pioneers did not find their path strewn with roses. Some came in over the soldiers' patrol road but the majority via St. Cloud. Those faces so dear and familiar to us are not seen any more. They became weary and tired and went to rest and were placed away underneath the sod by the wayside.

PIONEER KID.

(Continued)

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OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

IN SEARCH OF THE NEW RAILROAD

It was in those early pioneer days of 1868 or 69 when that little log schoolhouse was built near the S.W. corner of Sec. 20, District 25, in charge of our young little school maam, 16, (Mrs. Sophia L. Rice) who together with the school board had made out an order for school supplies. Being that all of the the board were ox-motor men, the question arose, how to get the supplies home from Sam Adams' store at New London, the quarters now occupied by Lewis Eckman and Harold Swenson. At close of school on Friday, the teacher explained the situation. I then volunteered to walk to New London the following day, Saturday, which I did and found everything sold out except six slates. In those days tablets and lead pencils were not in use. Each child had to be equipped with a slate and slate pencil. Mr. Adams informed me that school supplies were not nearer than Paynesville. Axel F. Nordin, son of Peter E. Nordin, homesteader on the place which is now the home of Carl Danielson, had organized an English Sunday school in the schoolhouse which I attended the next day, Sunday. The school supply question came up and I gave my report of getting only six slates. Paynesville was mentioned. I said, I have promised to get them and I shall, if I shall have to walk to Paynesville. Peter E. Nordin then spoke up and said he had been over at the new Foot Lake station and had seen school supplies at the little new store. I asked where is Foot Lake station and that little store? He said you strike the new railroad and you find the Foot Lake station on south side of Foot Lake. I shall put you on trail if you wish to go. On Monday morning at 4:00 o'clock I rapped at Nordin's door and said, I am on my way. He got up and followed me. We passed the homestead shack of a lady, Miss Ingeborg Tronness, who later became the wife of Pioneer John Edberg. Her homestead is now the farm home of S.A. Syverson of New London. He put me on the soldier patrol trail and said, Keep this trail across the log bridge on Shakopee creek and follow trail and watch for another trail leaving road going southeast of that grove, pointing, (being Mamrelund) with no other homesteaders in whole township of Mamre, but J.P. Rodman, John Hedman and Nels Abrahamson Sr. Before I got that far I met an ox-motor loaded with provisions for soldiers. Old Billy Whitney was the conductor. I had seen him once before just west of Erick Kvennerud's log cabin Norway Lake—New London road in the act of skinning an ox which had taken sick and died on a similar expedition. I exchanged a few words with him. He pointed with his whip and mentioned Norway Lake Fort, Six Mile Grove and Fort Abercrombie.

I found my trail. Leaving soldiers' patrol road going straight south across the eastern row of sections of what is now Mamre, around west end of Solomon Lake then southeasterly direction where I got a reminder that I never will forget. I believe it was in Sec. 6 Township of Willmar, where the road was running across a breaking seeded with wheat, over which I likely was trespassing but there was no other road to be seen. Very suddenly I heard a man shouting behind me. Looking back I saw a big man swinging a glittering axe, shouting and talking but I could not understand a single word. However, I understood his actions and his glittering axe. It goes without saying that I put on speed to the limit and I assure you, you never saw the pegs of a 12 yearling work to better advantage. I glanced back now and then as I imagined my big pursuer was on my heels all the time. Did not slow down very much until I reached the home of Helmer Martinson, 3 miles, just at the west end of Foot Lake. They appeared to me and always did appear to me, the most generous and kind people I ever met, especially the wife. She was the most motherly and kind woman you ever met. Those who knew Mr. Martinson will remember he enjoyed a little fun on someone's expense. In asking him what kind of people it was that lived about three miles west, he said, "That is a bunch one has to look out for," which was not hard to make me

believe from the experience I just had. The kind woman gave me sweet milk and something to eat which braced me up considerably, and said, "Come in when you come back." She seemed to be awestricken over me coming clear from near the Norway Lake Fort and intended to go back the same day. I then continued following the lake shore where the Fairview cemetery now is, but was then a wilderness, till I reached the outlet stream of Foot Lake just a few rods south of where the name Rice reminds us of the final resting place of our highly esteemed schoolmaam. There was no bridge. I had to wade across the stream at high water mark. I peeled off my clothes until I stood in old Adam's garb. Bundling up my clothes, I started into the stream. Getting half ways I stepped on a slippery stone and went into the water head first, bundle and all. But I did not stay long and was soon on the opposite side. My clothes were not as wet as you might think, as I was too quick in reorganizing. After drying my clothes a little while on bushes I proceeded to trail along lake shore which took me into the grove (now the fair grounds) near where lived a farmer, Erick Nelson, the brother of Ole N. Elgeross. Then through a wheat field which extended on what now is First ward, clear to the track. I found the little store on 7th street north of track, known as Rannestad's corner, and found school supplies to fill the bill.

PIONEER KID.

(To be continued)

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September 16, 1925

Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINSCENCES

THE RETURN FROM FOOT LAKE STATION

I had now found the new railroad, the little Foot Lake Station with its one little store north of track, (where now stands House No. 207, 7th St. No.) I had my school supplies done up in a bundle, had my dry sandwiches devoured by the aid of a water pail—my first lunch in the now City of Willmar. Now I felt like seeing more of the world. I crossed the track and on the south side found nothing but mules, horses, plows, scrapers, railroad builders' equipment, and a little lumber shack serving as temporary depot and warehouse. The southern part of what is now the city of Willmar, now adorned with modern dwelling houses, was then a slough of water where boats could be rowed between muskrat houses. The owner of the little store if memory serves me right, was a Mr. Leib. I believe he went across and erected a little pioneer store later know as the Dale and Roise store.

Now it was time for me to crank up for my home run. I picked up my luggage, which hung quite solid to my back. Following same road down thru the grove, I proceeded around the lake. The most important question now confronting me was how to get across the stream with my valuable luggage. I spied the railroad trestle over yonder and thot of the old Norwegian saying; "Pedre at gaa en krok, end at faa en vaat brok."

I crossed on the trestle and walked over what is now the Free church cemetery to edge of lake again. Followed lake shore to Helmer Martinson's. I was treated to a fine lunch. Now the next important question in my boy mind was how to get by the danger which Martinson's joke had made so real to me. He finally said I will go with you up over hill and put you onto a trail where you will strike the soldiers' patrol road on the east end of Solomon Lake instead of the west end and it is even much shorter. I said, anywhere at all as long as I can escape the danger. I thanked Martinsons for their accommodation, pulled off shoes and socks, and pelted off at a lively rate. I soon overtook an ox-motor man, Frederick Syverson, who offered me a ride, but I was speeded too high for his gait. I thanked him for his good intention and went a-flying. I followed the trail practically where the state road now runs with just a few small changes and truck the patrol road where the Solomon Lake church now stands. Following that road around north of lake, the direction did not suit me well: I felt I was going too much in a southwestern direction, pointing towards those dangerous people. I looked around and spied a man standing by a shack northeast of me, being the homesteader on the C.C. Birkeland farm. Walking over and introducing myself I found it was the right road to Guri Endresen's place and then northwest again. "But if you dare to cross the wild prairie I will put you on a trail which will shorten your way many miles," he said. He then brot me on the tip of Solomon Lake Hills, better known as Dovre Hills, where I could see the whole panorama—the whole Norway Lake country in its beauty. He said, "Just south of Crook Lake Grove they finished a bridge across Shakopee Creek yesterday. One farmer came across that new bridge and the wild prairie up to here today, going to the station and returning a little while ago. By following his trail you can not miss it. I think he gave his name as Simonson. I chose his route, thanking him for the accommodation. I followed a fairly good trail to where the Thorpe schoolhouse now stands. On that whole stretch north of the hills were only two homesteaders' shacks. Not finding the above mentioned man's trail, I went to one of those shacks to inquire. Found a young man digging into a large pile of books. He offered me his home made stool, himself sitting on the bed. He was talkative and I was inquisitive, which resulted in a good conversation. We found we both hailed from North Prairie, Fillmore County. He told me to mention names. When I mentioned Halvor Harange-dalen, he said that used to be his headquarters while teaching there. I found it necessary to be moving but when I got on my feet found it nearly impossible as my legs were as stiff as pokers. I inquired for the man's trail. He had seen the man going and put me onto the trail. Before parting I wanted to know the name of my kind entertainer. He said, Lars O. Thorpe, and over in that other shack is my brother, Mikkel Thorpe. I believe they were both bachelors by appearances.

Now I followed that trail thru knee-deep grass, found the new bridge, also something else. I found mosquitos by the millions, and tame they were, crawling into mouth, nose, ears and eyes and if it had not been for my handkerchief hanging over my face I think I would have smothered.

From bridge, one mile west of crossing of present state road, to the grove was a mile. I now had fairly good road because of the hauling of bridge material from the grove. At the grove I found that the man going across prairie to new Foot Lake station was Peter A. Odell, later one of our pioneer sheriffs. He said, "You made a long walk today. You are welcome to stay over night with me. I am batching." ("Men vi ska steak pankaker, ata pankaker, grade och sokker, drikka kaffe och lefva rullan.") This sounded good to me but I had no stopover ticket but was bound for home. I usually was never nervous or afraid of

anything, but must admit my spunk was not worth much that night when I got into that dense grove. (Dahl's Grove), for the first time. It was getting dark and I was reminded of the killing there of Johannes Iverson by the Indians and that he was buried there someplace. I kept teasing myself till I imagined every tree was an Indian. Speeding thru the grove like a lightfooted rabbit. I got thru and found the home of Ole Dahl, who had married the widow of the slain Iverson and lived in our school district. I was again worried over how to find our schoolhouse over the prairie. Dahl said, "I have just been running a mower over there today for the accommodation of the children. You follow that mower swath and you can not miss it." I found our schoolhouse, shoved up a window sash and was relieved of my luggage which appeared to me about three times as heavy as when I first started at Foot Lake station. I now had 1 1/2 miles home and on my school trail I did not worry. I would take a rest. I sat down on the door steps and was sound asleep in about a minute. Was awakened by the worst thundering and lightning I had ever seen. I went in thru the window, but it did not suit me. I then jumped out and started for home, but could not run. I had to stand still at every dark spell and with double speed at every streak of lightning, got half way, when it began raining. Not raining, but pouring down. It must have been a regular cloudburst. In low places I waded in water up to the knees. I got home at midnight after walking about 40 miles. Had redeemed my pledge. I was wet to the skin and tired and hungry as a government mule. Such was my first trip to the Foot Lake Station on the new railroad, now the City of Willmar.

Today over the state road we can make the trip in about 40 minutes. If we those days had seen a minister coming over the hills and vales at dusk with two glaring lights as we do in this day, we would unhesitatingly have declared him to be 'Old Belzebub' himself or something as bad. The now growing generation, that cannot go to the nearest neighbor without riding in an auto, should not be allowed to overlook or ignore the hardships of the old struggling pioneers.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

8

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

I REPORT TO THE TEACHER

(Article No. 8)

The morning following my Foot Lake trip I went to school and to check up and give an account of myself. The roof had been leaking from that soaking rain and our little teacher was just in the act of housecleaning when I came. She said, "I am glad to see you are home again. Was worrying of you all day yesterday, because I was the cause of your going. How did you get along?" I tried to explain but could not handle the English language and we were strictly forbidden under penalty to talk anything else. We were taught to understand that we were there to learn to talk United States, and vocabulary stunts were rather limited. She said, ("Du far tala Norska nu.") "I imagine you had a rather tough time." And I talked Norwegian explaining my trip in detail until the little Varmland teacher became so sympathetic

that there were tears in her eyes. But then she bursted out laughing and said, "I am glad it's all over." I said it was no pleasure trip but I am very much pleased over the fact that I was able to accomplish something good for the promotion of our school. Adding the New London trip both ways, Saturday to the Foot Lake trip on Monday I traveled about 60 miles to get the necessary school supplies.

50 Years Ago This Summer

50 years ago this summer since we celebrated the wedding of A.H.Gordhammer to Miss Jennie, oldest daughter of the pioneers. Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Mankell, on Midsummer Day. June 24, 1875, when we had a good pioneer time running around a midsummer pole decorated with midsummer June flowers.

Fifty years ago this summer since it began raining latter part of harvest and rained continually for three weeks, no hard showers but light showers and sultry. Just enough to keep things in deadlock, leaving grain shocks as green as cabbages.

Fifty years ago this fall since the threshers, myself included, had to cover the face with wet sponges in order to avoid inhaling clouds of dust caused by that 3 weeks' rain.

Fifty years ago last March 25 since the first stone was hauled for the foundation of the East Norway Lake church built that summer by Anton Kammen. The first church in circle of 50 miles or more. Ox drivers did all local hauling, while those having horses pledged themselves to haul all the materials from St. Cloud.

Fifty years ago this summer since this locality had the heaviest grain crop ever put on record. Fifty years ago this fall since the first couple was married in the new church, being Hans Johnson Gubberud to the daughter of the pioneers Mr. and Mrs Gulbrand Bjorkevik. Mr. and Mrs. Ole A. Nybakken were the 2nd couple, same fall.

Pioneer Day at County Fair

'Thanks,' is a little word but it has a wide scope. It is easy to say but hardly any word is so badly neglected. "Thank you" is a cheery expression, but too many over look the real genuine meaning of such cheery expressions. Being an early pioneer myself, having something to do with the pioneer homecoming day, I feel myself on behalf of the early pioneers under obligation of appreciation and thanks to the Kandiyohi County Fair Association for their liberal way in recognizing the pioneers by giving them one day to their own. Also appreciation and thanks to the band which escorted us to the grandstand. In facing that audience however, a sad feeling overpowered me. I looked in vain for those good old pioneer faces so familiar to me. Where is your grandfather, your grandmother, your father your mother, and all those good old pioneers, good neighbors? Oh, you say, they are not here with us today. They became weary and tired, wanted to rest and were put away underneath the sod, and we must look for their names on the granite blocks in the cemeteries. Also thanks to those bringing relics to our little pioneer tent. Come again next year! Hope it will be established as a permanent feature.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

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September 30, 1925

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

A BOY VISITS WEST LAKE GRAVE

In the very early pioneer days, St. Cloud was the railroad terminal. (1866) No other railroad known those days. It was very natural that the choice places were sought first. Consequently there were colonies at the different groves and miles apart, no one settling on naked prairies as long as a grove was in sight. I can remember there was a colony at or near Sacred Heart, Renville county, one along river at Montevideo, Chippewa county, and one Six Mile Grove, Stearns county, Burbank, Nest Lake, Green Lake, Eagle Lake, Diamond Lake and Lake Lillian seemed to have some farmers in between. The Norway Lake colony seemed to be the hub. Just in the center. The St. Cloud-Norway Lake mail route via Paynesville was established with Andrew Railson as postmaster. To begin with we got the mail every other Saturday or in other words, twice a month. The P.O. at mail days was the place where news were conveyed and exchanged. From the different conversations you could draw the conclusion that all the different colonies were represented. One Saturday mail day I heard of a place where thirteen persons were buried in one grave, the victims of the Indians massacre. I learned it was seven miles from our place and I had a great desire to go and see the place. The following morning, Sunday, I started off, passing first a bachelor shack, that of C.E. Lien, now the home of Martin Skaalerud. Lien became the well-known Judge C. E. Lien who was Judge of Probate of Kandiyohi county for about 30 years ago. Next went over the wild prairie to Ole Knutson's. Then Elling Sagadalen, next two bachelor shacks those of Erick Paulson and Jacob E. Ramstad on the stretch of 7 miles. Reached the home of Andrew Monson on whose farm the grave was located. He was hitching up the team getting ready to spend Sunday with his brother-in-law, Iver K. Syse, but pointed out to me the place. I found the grave which was not much to see. A sunken neglected grave overgrown with weeds. But every weed had a story underneath. My roots rest in that remains of 13 of those of that little Swedish colony who dressed that fatal Sunday morning to go and listen to a religious service by Rev. Andrew Jackson, little knowing that the clothes they put on that morning were to be their funeral garb. Being only 11 years old it had a sad effect on my boyish mind and brot tears to my eyes. I tried to eat a dry sandwich but could not do it. I then started on my home hike. Got to Eric Paulson's shack. He was not at home, went over to Jacob where I found them both, asking for a drink of water, Jacob gave me milk and a good lunch which I appreciated very much. Was very talkative and took much interest in me. Erick wanted a little fun on my expense and asked if I never saw a grave before. I said, yes, but not one with such a tragic history as the one in question.

They had started some sort of a bachelor household as neighbors but Eric went back on Jacob. He went and tied up with Johanna Lundberg, one of the survivors who escaped the death of the tyrannic Indians' lust of blood. He left his homestead and moved onto the Lundberg place, which always was his home with the exception of a short time in New London. He had with him his mother who reached the high age of 103 years. He himself died a few years ago. The place is now the home of his son, Louis Paulson.

Jacob evidently felt a little lonesome and putout over such treatment from his pal. The Lake Johanna colony held the distinction of having the only school maam in the whole territory. She was engaged to teach common school somewhere where Sunburg now stands. But I do not know where as there was not a schoolhouse in the whole country. But it appeared that there was one at least who knew. Everything went on smoothly as everything always did those pioneer days. She closed her school in a way satisfactory to all concerned. It was soon rumored that the schoolmaam had disappeared from her Lake Johanna home. There was some some talk about swiping and kidnapping. A gang of inquisitive trailers was soon on the run. When it was discovered that Jacob E. Ramstad was the guilty party, he meekly admitted that he had swiped and kidnapped the teacher, trunk and all to get even with Eric.

What they did to Jacob I do not know but I know that he is still on his pioneer homestead and has reared one of the most respectable families in the country and sent out a half a dozen good school maams himself. They took after their mother. When it came to final settlement everything balanced. Jacob is at peace with everybody concerned, is one of the very first threshers of the Even Railson type. He was one of those bringing in the first threshing machine in to this country run by horse power under the management of Even Railson. J. Axel Hedin and Jacob E. Ramstad.

PIONEER KID

(To be continued)

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October 7, 1925 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENSES

NORWEGIANS FROM ALL BYGDS

Our townsman and early pioneer of Lake Andrew, Lars Nelson, at the age of 16, in 1867, together with others, started from Decorah, Iowa, per ox-motor train, his destination being Norway Lake, Monongalia County, Minnesota. His parents and one little sister, now Mrs. John A. Halvorson, took train to St. Cloud, taking chances to finish the 60 miles distance from St. Cloud to Norway Lake, the best they could. After three long weeks of journey Lars reached his destination just in time to see his father alive. The latter passed away the next morning and was the first person buried at the just newly established church lot and cemetery of the Norway Lake church, a pair of infant twins were also buried at their father's side.

From that time on the Norway Lake country was rapidly settled and with the exception of a sprinkle of Swedes, was completely under full control of the Norwegians from their different bygder in Norway. Sogninger, Vassings, Hardangers, Bergensors, Lanninger, Hallinger, Valdriser, Eggedolmger, Osterdolinger, Gulbrandsdalinger, Tronjemmers, Arendal, Telemarkings, Hedemarkings, Nordfjorings, Sonfjorings, Sonmorings, Flekkefjoringer, Stavangers, Haugesunders, Sigjolingar, Saterdolingar, Nannestaders, Solungerolingers (and Maanungers which spells and reads in the English language,

Moonshiners,) and there's a place in Norway called Galten. Those from there were called Galtunger. Beat it if you can. So consequently the Norway Lake colony got to be a Norwegian stronghold.

PRAIRIE FIRES

The first prairie fire scare. Anyone who ever saw a prairie fire and saw what we did in the latter part of November 1867, would naturally think nothing would be left in this world. Old pioneer Sven Brogen and son Gunder Swenson, had wisely broken some furrows about 3 to 4 rods apart running parallel and burned in between for fire protection. Some of those marks are visible yet. In the afternoon we noticed something like an eclipse of the sun which turned out to be a thick cloud of smoke, with the wind from southwest. It was said to be a prairie fire started at Minnesota River by reckless trappers. Clouds of smoke, cinders of burnt grass and weeds began to fall down like snowflakes. A roar something like that of a freight train was heard. Flames were seen like galloping horses. Tongues of flames ascended as if trying to lick the skies. Swenson's breaking served a good purpose. The East wing was killed by good fighter. The point ran against Norway Lake, formed a new point and set off for the Big Grove colony where we heard it did more damage than here. Andreas Jorgenson, who came in company with us a month previously, had gotten winter quarters from his family at C.E. Lien's shack (now the home of Martin Skaalrud.) After the scare was over we went there to see how they were getting along. The whole prairie was left in black crepe, smoke yet ascending here and there. We found old Grandma Anna had gathered up her little bundle of clothes, all what she had in this world, and made for a plowed field. Asking her how she was getting along, she folded her hands, looked up towards the skies and said with a sigh: "Oh, I surely thought it was the last day of the world." This old lady about 75, was the great grandma of Mrs. P.A. Gandrud, who is a daughter of Sigri Jorgenson, Mrs. Iver Gronseth. Sigri and myself were born on the same day, March 1st, same year and same month, and have kept pace with time like a pair of twins. In immigrating into this wild wilderness, we were on the same ox-motor train, which was arranged so that we could walk behind and drive a bunch of cattle, a flock of sheep and fight mosquitos and horse flies which knew no limit. We came together on the same day to Norway Lake on the 28th of October, 1867. We were confirmed together the same day, August 18, 1872, in a pioneer shack with unplanned floor, rough walls under a sod roof and lived genuine pioneers life. We were a good ways apart, but met occasionally and when we did meet, we met like sister and brother. Sigri is the daughter of Marit, Mrs. Andrias Jorgenson, and Marit is the daughter of Grandma Anna who imagined she seen the last day of the world.

Another time going to Willmar, I met a Mr. Anfin Thompson living somewhere south of Belgrade. We formed company home. He drove a stylish rig, a span of fine 4-year olds, a brand new wagon and new well trimmed harnesses, valued at about \$600.00. Going over the Dover hills we were overtaken by a prairie fire. We had some discussion over next step. I suggested to turn horses against fire and whip them thru. He suggested tying them to wagons. But the fire did not wait for our decisions. It was on us in a fury. I whipped my team thru with burning manes and tails and put out fire with a sack. My partner was not to be seen. I tied my team to the wagon. His team had gotten unruly, ran into a slough with 5-ft. dry grass burning all around them. We put out the fire with wet sacks, got his horses out, hitched my team to rear end of his wagon, pulling it out, reorganized again. His horses with burnt tails and manes, wagon and harnesses badly damaged, we proceeded north till we got to Nels Brattlund's place, now the

Martin Reierson farm, where his horses gave out and I was to leave him and go west. He put up at Braatlund's. One of the horses died that night. The other lived a day or two but died also. Don't think they suffered so much from outside burns as from inhaling flames into their lungs. No more danger of such fires any more. Most of the country is plowed up and pastures closely eaten. Those days grass on the prairies stood knee high and on the edges of sloughs 5 to 7 feet which gave ample feed for the greedy devouring element. More to follow about prairie fires.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)