

# 15

November 11, 1925 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

TRIP TO ST. CLOUD—(15)

(Continued)

The next day, Wednesday, nothing noteworthy happened. We just moved along till noon, when I unhitched and relieved the oxen of their yoke to eat their dinner. A man approached me ordering me to move along, said the grass belonged to him clear to the wheel track. I obeyed orders, got the yoke to put on oxen when he seemingly appeared in a milder mood and tried to help me. I felt a little touchy and said, Just keep out of the way, I'll attend to this and started off looking for another convenient place but reasoned like this, I suppose they are all alike down this way. So I let the oxen giggle along. Reached St. Cloud a little before sunset without any serious happenings. Was not held up for running over anybody, neither arrested for over speeding. Getting inside village limits, I gave full navigation to the oxen, knowing they had come from St. Cloud they would naturally go home, which they did straight-way to the barn where I met Mr. Clark. He laid his hand on one of the oxen and said, "So you are coming home, Buck and Bright." He said, "They are rather thin." I did not say anything to him but said to myself, I am thin also having had only one decent meal since I left home. The oxen were now safe in their master's care but where was I? It was not like coming over to a good neighbor, go right into the house and make yourself at home. I now had to paddle my own canoe. He pointed and directed me to a hotel, which did not suit me very much. I went over to the hotel, but returned. I could not be induced to stop at a strange hotel among only strangers. Would rather take the chances in a shed with a dog for the following reason. I had heard so many hair raising stories about frontier life murders and bloodsheds. Thomas Osmundson, one of the very first settlers in this wilderness not long before my St. Cloud trip showed me three holes thru the side of his wagon box and a splintered spoke in a hind wheel of his wagon, being penetrated by Indian bullets. Osmundson came to Norway Lake with family in 1859 settling on Sec. 8, Town of Lake Andrew. Indians were numerous but peaceful. He built himself a little log cabin on south side of the grove, now best known as the Halvorson Beach. His mother died in 1861, one year before the Indian outbreak, being the first person known to die in this new territory and wilderness. No cemetery or anything in that line. He buried her on the place just south of his house. When the Indians broke out in 1862. Refugees still on the isle of refuge in Norway Lake, not over 100 rods away, Osmundson and his father-in-law, Sven Borgen, father of Gunder Swenson, preparing for fleeing, hitched their oxen, to wagon, drove over to Osmundson's cabin for two different reasons, to get what household effects they could take along and to make a mark by his mother's grave. Approaching the cabin, three Indians came out from their hiding in the brush and opened fire on them while yet standing in the wagon box which resulted in the above marks on wagon. Osmundson attributed the saving of their lives to the fact that the Indians while people were away had broken into a trunk helping themselves to different things, also found a bottle of brandy in which they indulged, making them too squint-eyed for good marksmen. When Osmundson reached for his gun in the box they disappeared. He

got what he conveniently could take. The rest together with house was burnt by Indians. He showed me the mark after the cellar which is visible yet at the Halvorson Beach. If memory serves me right he said Even Railson, Even Glesnes, Ole Knutson and Erick Kapperud were off burying the 13 killed at West Lake and Gunder Swenson, a youth of 18, was placed on horseback as a spy to be on guard while they worked with guns ready for quick action on short notice and the story about Johannes Iverson killed near Crook Lake, and concluded by saying: "It was not only the Indians we had to fear. We had amongst us the white bandits, robbers and murderers." In mixing with strangers you could never know who to trust. This together with the doses given me by Forstrom at the Lake Andrew inlet on Tuesday morning was the cause of me keeping shy of strange hotels among strangers. I returned to the little barn to take another look at my partners who had laid down in their stall facing each other, and said to myself, there is my place in between them. We bunked together last night in the open. Bunking together inside of these walls and under this roof is so much of an improvement, but I will have a bite to eat first. Going down to the wagon which was already shoved over to the yard corner, untying my provision grip. I spied a girl carrying a dishpan towards the yard. I knew her on sight and greeter her by saying, Hello, Karin! Looking at me she said, "I am pleasantly surprised to see you. How did you come?" I said, I just brot a yoke of oxen her for Mr. Clark. "Oh," she said, "he just told us a little boy brot them." The girl was our nearest neighbor girl, Miss Karin Slattum, sister of Pioneer Ole Slattum. Asking her if she stayed at Clark's, she said yes. I said, Suppose I roll up my coat and lay under my head, and sleep on the bare kitchen floor, would there be any objection? And added, last night I slept between the oxen in the open, was refused both lodging and meals along road. She went into a laughing fit and sat down on the ground to laugh it out at my expense. "No," she said, "I am the boss at this kitchen, Come right in." I gladly accepted the most welcome invitation. Now I could cheat the mosquitoes. It began to look brighter. She made me a good supper and we chatted away for a while. I spied a young man passing corners, but did not pay much attention as I was not concerned. She said, "You may be tired. I'll get you a couple quilts." She got me two old quilts, laid them on floor in front of cupboard. I said, Karin, I like to get an early start in the morning so don't get surprised if I am gone when you come around in the morning. She said, "You will not go without your breakfast. I'll get up any time you wish. What do you like for breakfast?" I said my choice dish for breakfast is pancakes. Good night. Then I played Fido and cuddled in. But what a miserable night with lightning continually so you might think the little village of St. Cloud was all ablaze. Thundering and raining something unusually. Did not sleep much that night. Had ample time to review father's two words—Tough Trip—and then sneaking into my mind---Kid, you should have stayed at home.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

## 16

November 18, 1925 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

## MY RETURN FROM ST. CLOUD. 16

I got up early Thursday morning, rolled the quilts up and out of the way, after that night of severe thundering, lightning and raining. Karin came gasping, evidently not having had not much sleep either. Had a good breakfast of pancakes, which tasted immensely well. I then rolled up my pants above the knees, shoved socks in shoes, tied them together, slung them over my shoulders and with the provision grip in my hand I stood ready for my sixty-mile hike over roads wet and muddy caused by the night's rain. My aim for the first day's run was the before mentioned schoolhouse which I reached with time to spare. Had to hang around for some time before I dared to intrude, planning that having no oxen to worry over I would catch a good sleep. I finally shoved up the lower sash, found a big book (evidently a dictionary) laid the book under my head on a long bench behind the door, covered my head with my coat to cheat the mosquitoes and believe I was sound asleep in a minute. I was horrified later to be awakened by the rattle of keys in the door lock and some loud talking outside in some strange language. I jumped to my feet and said to myself: "Kid you're ripe now!" In haste I made for that window but spied three men outside. I never was so frightened in my life. But I said to myself, "Brace up Kid. There's just one thing to do Mix with the crowd and sneak out before lamp is lit." I succeeded in getting outside. I met a kid my size and asked him what was going on. He said a German meeting of some kind. I then adjusted my speedometer for highest speed and got away from that schoolhouse in a double hurry and in darkness stumbled over a hay cock and was not in much of a hurry in getting up. Laid a while pondering and wondering—stranger amongst strangers. Says I to myself, 'Over there is that fence corner where the oxen and myself bunked night before last, I'll take this hay cock and bring it over into that corner, but I do not dare to make a smoke.' In grabbing the hay I could feel something cold and soft running over my wrist. It evidently was a snake which I disturbed in its night quarters. But I proceeded and brot the hay over. One not being enough I found another, both evidently a cleaning of school yard, and crawled in like a hog and slept all night. In the morning I tried to eat but my crumbs were too hard. No eating. Just so precious knife. I started off. After traveling for some time I met a man trying to make a yoke pin without a knife. He asked if I had a knife. "Yes," I said, "I can help you out." But to my disappointment found I was minus the knife. I then asked how far it was back to that schoolhouse. He said three miles. I then walked back and found it. Coming back to that point I had made 9 miles out of 3.

I soon passed Paynesville, got into the Burbank country, where I was feeling easier, more like home. I went into a house by the roadside and asked for a drink of water which I readily got, with a sunshine smile. The lady of the house then asked where I was from. I said my home is at Norway Lake and am just returning from a trip to St. Cloud. She said, "Our teacher boards with us. She is from Norway Lake. Miss Brattlund. Do you know her?" I said I certainly do. She is our neighbor girl and been my teacher for two terms. She said, "Is that so. Then you shall have a cup of fresh butter milk and a doughnut and take that rocking chair while I make dinner and make yourself to home." The teacher also came for dinner. We had a good time. A good dinner on the credit of our ex-teacher, Miss Sophia Brattlund. (Later Mrs. Sophia L. Rice.) I would not have been feeling prouder if I had been invited to dine with King George of England. She told them about my walk to the Foot Lake station to get the first school supplies for Dist. 25. They put me on the road to New London, which suited me fine as I was not much in love with that brushy road north of Lake Andrew. Getting to New London our home market place, I was feeling more

at ease. Went into the Sam Adams store to take a little rest and hung down on a sack of coffee and went to sleep. I was awakened by a shake and a shout, "Get up, what's the matter with you. Are you drunk?" I said I was tired and just wanted to rest a little. The kid, about my age said, "How much rest do you need?" You slept for two hours." This sounded ridiculous, but I found it was true. When I tried to walk he had another laugh at me. "You certainly must be drunk." I could hardly move one foot by the other. They were stiff as castings. That kid was Harold Swenson of New London. I now proceeded. By the time I got where Ole Fossum now lives I was completely limbered up for the last stretch of ten miles and got home before sunset. I went direct to Kristian Bjornstad to take another look at that \$5.00 bill, but it did not appear as big to me as I imagined at first, after taking into consideration the four days spent with their hard experiences. He wanted to know how I had been getting along and I told him in detail. He then said, "You've been doing well. I will make you a premium of \$2.50." So I walked home, the proudest kid in the neighborhood with my \$7.50.

The only one having me beat on traveling on foot is our present chairman of town supervisors, L.H. Larson, who traveled clear to South Dakota to see his best girl.

Another glimpse to St. Cloud. The young man I saw passing the corners was Edmond Olson. I had never met him but he was a homesteader in the wilds. He took care of that girl and made her his bride on the first following Christmas. The wedding took place at her brother's place, Ole Slattum, now the home of Severin Hatlestad. By that time a change had taken place. Then I drove a span of horses and had the honor of bringing the newlyweds to the log cabin on his homestead, now the home of Hans O Myhre of Arctander. They celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their wedding two years ago last Christmas at Silverton, Oregon.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

## 17

November 25, 1925 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

PIONEERS AND OXEN (No. 17)

Will continue by saying I made another trip to St. Cloud that same summer of 1868 and had as a partner with me my good old friend and my pioneer schoolmaster Lars Christofferson. Mr. Christofferson left Christiania, Norway, that spring and with his family landed at the extreme western railroad terminal at St. Cloud. Here he met Pioneer John Sandviken of Lake Johanna colony, who took him and family to Lake Johanna, leaving his emigrant goods at St. Cloud. Not feeling quite satisfied at Lake Johanna, he came over to the Norway Lake colony, where he found himself perfectly at home and filed on the claim which has been his home ever since until his death a few days ago. He reached the high age of 98. The question was how to get the goods from St. Cloud. It fell to my lot to yoke up the oxen, hitch up and go.

We started a Monday morning and got home on Saturday, taking the whole week. From my previous experiences I was prepared with quilts and we slept on ground under the wagon. We had some difficulty in finding the good, as there was a swarming of emigrants. Putting those large newcomer chests into the wagon was like climbing on top of a threshing machine. You young people who think a common automobile is too plain, how would you like to climb onto such a load and drive 60 miles with a yoke of oxen? I know of a kid who did, and would enjoy another trip like it.

Old Pioneer and Indian chaser, Thomas Osmundson, has passed on long ago, but has left a respectable representation behind him. Gunder and Sivert, his sons, Mr.s Norin, (Nellie Osmundson), his daughter. The Garage Osmundsons are grandsons and Miss Norin at Kandiyohi County Bank, a granddaughter. A host of grandchildren and great grandchildren. Mrs. Thomas Osmundson is still living and makes her home with her daughter, Mrs. Nellie Norin, and is doing well at the age of 85.

It was way back in the year 1864, before the dust and the smoke from the Civil war hardly was being settled, while there still were soldiers stationed along the line at the different forts. A man by the name of Baalson and others took a stroll out through the wild west on a land and homeseking expedition, going in the northwesterly direction by the way of St. Paul and St. Cloud and then in the westerly direction. Their starting point was Spring Grove in the southeastern corner of the state and the destination, the wellknown Big Grove settlement in Stearns county where they decided to file on lands for the future homes for themselves and their families. They were the originators and established the wellknown Big Grove colony. On their return trip they decided to take the other route. They called on the Norway Lake colony but got lost in the wilderness. After traveling about for some time, they struck the Lake Johanna—Norway Lake trail bringing them to the Norway Lake Fort. They had a strain of Viking blood running in through their veins and consequently were capable of Viking pranks. They decided as a change on the program to have a little fun of their own. To play Indians, yell and “too! Too!” and this nearly cost them their lives. The first settlers coming in from the north were three brothers, Nels Petterson, Petter Petterson and Hans Petterson. They were not to trifle with in those days in their prime of life and Viking spirit inspired with loyalty under Lincoln’s administration. Nels Petterson was the owner of the Norway Lake Fort grounds at time of his death. If it was not for the quick “thumbs up” and quick surrender problem they would have gone down the Indian happy hunting grounds. But the problem was solved. They were all representatives of two different colonies and were treated loyally.

The one telling me this story about 35 years ago, gave me names familiar to me—Even Railson, Christoffer Hanson and Sven Borgen. They were now on the soldiers patrol trail crossing Shakopee creek on the Government log bridge just below the house of Gunder Pederson. They gave me the name of the Hardanger heroine, Mrs. Guri Endreson Roseland and her hospitable way along by Long Lake and Eagle Lake. They mentioned the war veterans, Sivert Olson, Nils Grue and one Hendrik Paulson. Early settler Mads Knudson and others. Then following the soldiers trail through East till they again met with their families at Spring Grove tired out after their great trip of adventures.

The next spring in 1865, just 60 years ago, they rigged out with oxen and covered wagons leaving for their wild western homesteads. I have myself while only a little shaver gone over practically the same route driving cattle and sheep and write from experience. The route was made the route-call given I

remember well, from the southeastern corner of the state, Rushford, St. Charles, Rochester, Pine Island, Zumbrota, Wanamingo, Cannon Falls, Hastings, St. Paul, St. Cloud, Paynesville and the Norway Lake colony. The trip was anything but pleasure. Covered wagons going in all directions was an everyday sight drawn by oxen. No graveled roads, no cemented paved highways, no roads established on section lines. Roads and temporary bridges were laid where most convenient. Heavy rainfall and flood washing and bringing bridges down the stream making it a hardship.

It seems to me I can yet hear the howling, shouting, "Git-up-ing," whipping and cracking. Seems to me I can yet see those willing docile poor oxen under that hard piece of wood called yoke, and the whip lashing put the very last pound of their weight to the problem. Two and three yoke of oxen in a string to pull out a covered wagon at the time out of the mud holes. The oxen were always my pets. I enjoyed handling them. I was only a little boy but had a big heart of sympathy with those poor oxen, when they were abused, misused and tormented in many a cruel way. The only means by which to hold back a heavy load down hill was their neck and horns. Were they not able to suit, then they were pounded over the nose till you could see blood in their nostrils. The ox did not ask much—no feed, no torn harnesses. Being relieved of the yoke and turned loose, he would take care of himself. But many owner would not stop to take yoke off, but buckled together the oxen, then they had to eat with the yoke hanging on their horns. What a comfort for them? The oxen were misused. So were many an old pioneer getting the same treatment as did the old dog when he made roses on the newly scrubbed floor. The ox was relieved by the horses, after doing what the horse could not do. The yoke thrown carelessly away. The chain is a relic. The old wagon lies over there in the brush. The old man, weary and tired, his form looking like a question mark, stooping and bending over, was laid to rest. His name is carved on that granite block over in that cemetery.

Now back to the subject, Pioneer Baalson & Co., Spring Grove, Minn., preparing for their ox-motor trip through the wild west wilderness practically over the route above described, were not the exception of pioneering experiences.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

## 18

December 2, 1925 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

BAALSON'S TRIP —(No. 18)

If memory serves me right, the families accompanying the Baalson's were those of Nels Strande and Nels Strandemoen. If a little error should creep in, don't be too severe in your criticism. Remember that 50 and 60 years is a long time for memory. This caravan was slowly gliding along, not proceeding as fast as anticipated, crossing the Mississippi on a toll bridge at St. Paul, then only a shanty town. Somewhere

northwest of St. Paul a little baby girl was born to the Baalson family, the hospital being a covered wagon by the roadside which added another 3 days delay, after which they proceeded slowly, finally reaching their destination point, Big Grove in Stearns county. They did not find brilliant, modern structures ready for them to step into like the young folks nowadays—well equipped farms with modern housings. They had to meet the situations bravely. Had to roll up their sleeves, dig themselves hovels in the hillside, build a little log cabin, a lumber shack, or build a sodhouse, while their abode temporarily was their covered wagons, and meeting with different kinds of adverses and troubles coming their way. One time Pioneer Baalson ventured out a little too far in a snow storm, got lost, was caught in darkness and storm wandering about like so many have done who lost their lives in those severe storms of early days. He finally spied a big hole in a hillside, evidently an abode of a bunch of inhabitants belonging to some wild furry tribe, on the edge of the grove. He crawled in there feet first to try to save his life from freezing to death. His situation can better be guessed than explained. Storm and darkness above and the wild furry inhabitants below which might have torn their unwelcome intruder to shreds. Next morning daylight however and the calming down of the weather brot him back to his folks, none the worse for his critical experience.

Such were the conditions where the little girl born in the covered wagon by the wayside grew up to womanhood. She is now Mrs. Fred Swenson of Brooten, is mother and grandmother, and the wellknown Rev. H.E. Baalson of the Norway Lake charges is her brother. August Odell of Brooten, brother of C.W. Odell of Willmar, is her brother-in-law; all the marriages and intermarriages of the Baalson large family is too much for me to master. A Norway Lake neighbor boy, Olaf Linnerud, made a dive and picked up one of Baalson's girls who prides herself by referring to Pioneer Baalson as Great Grandpa.

#### PIONEER DAYS

'Way back in new settlers' early day

The sturdy pioneers blazed the way,

A pair of oxen, a yoke and a chain,

Through winter's snowstorm and summer rain,

A covered wagon was all he had,

Compelled by snowfall he made a sled,

In through the wilds and the Indian trails,

The roughs and tumbles which never fails,

The pioneers struggled and fought their way,

They wished and hoped for a better day.

They turned the wild sod just upside down;

They toiled and struggled without a frown.  
Some built their cabins from rough plain logs;  
Another piled up his walls from sod;  
While others lived in a bachelor shack,  
A bed and a stove about all he had.  
He managed housekeeping all alone,  
But nevertheless it was home sweet home.  
The houses were narrow, the roofs were low,  
And often hidden beneath the snow.

Such was the life of the pioneer day,  
But where there is courage, there is always a way.  
If courage weakened, he set anew,  
Like stormy sky when the sun breaks through.  
Where are the cabins we used to see?  
'Tis just a question, 'twixt you and me.  
Where are the pioneers so brave and bold,  
Who left a mark where'er they took hold.  
Oh, bring me back to those pioneer shacks,  
Another chat with the friends we had,  
The friends who chatted about future fair,  
Today have left us a vacant chair.

About the future we do not know,  
But generations, they come and go,  
And one by one we have laid to rest,  
Old pioneers, our friends and guest.  
The young can enjoy a place to stay,



While parents and grandparents have passed away.

Our country now is a beauty scene,

With trees and groves and with homes serene.

Equipments modern, without and within,

In latest style and in finest trim.

The young generation are prone to stay,

But the old pioneers, they have blazed the way.

--PIONEER KID.

## 19

December 9, 1925 Willmar Tribune

### OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

No. 19

#### WHEN MY PET OXEN RAN AWAY WITH THE PREACHER

It was in the month of May one year in those early pioneer day, the time when the settlers were few and miles apart. The time that preachers or missionaries were taking their choice in traveling afoot or catching an oxmobile ride between settlers, most of whom lived in dugouts in hillsides, myself included. A.O. Oppegaard, then a lay preacher (later ordained to the ministry) and was the well known Rev. Oppegaard of the Hauge Synod. He was the father of the well known Dr. Oppegaard, formerly of New London. He came to our place traveling afoot from place to place holding religious services in the new settlers' shacks and dugouts. On his laid out route he had for his next stop the name of Johannes Moe, a respectable family of pioneers in Norway Lake township, who lived in a dugout like the rest. He asked the direction and the distance. Father said, 6 or 7 miles, but you don't have to walk. He said, "Have you horses?" "No" father said, "but something next to it—a yoke of oxen that can leave you behind in walking and a good driver." I listened to their conversation just anxious to go, driving oxen which was my hobby sport. I soon had the yoke on the oxen and hitched to the wagon. Spring seats were a luxury those days and were not known. I found as usual a piece of board laid across the wagon box, which was rather short. We were nicely seated and started off between what is now Norway Lake store and Ole Knutson's place in Arctander for four miles was not settlers—all wild prairie. Arriving at the spot where now stands the Smehaugen place, but then wild prairie, we overtook another ox-driver moving along with a pair of slow oxen. My oxen were fast and trained to pass all other oxen on the road, but were docile, nice and well broke, obeying every order. I asked the other driver if he would turn off a little or stop to let us by. He began sassing us, and said, "There is plenty of room on the prairie." I stretched my

neck and glanced over his wagon box and noticed he also had a partner with him in shape of the little brown jug nicely tucked away in the corner, which was a true companion those days going to town as empty and light-headed as its master, and returning from town as full as its master. This accounted for his glibby oratory and vocabulary demonstrations. I laid my whip gently over the off ox and said, Come Ha, Buck! Which was all that was needed. The oxen knew the rest and speeded off at a runaway gait, believing they were doing their duty and awaiting further orders. But I had become so foolish I could not control either myself or the oxen. The short seat board fell down, the preacher went head over to the rear of the wagon box. When I glanced back he was on all four, bumping up and down like a sack of hay, hanging on to his hat, umbrella and handgrip, with a pair of eyes which would do credit to any wild west show. Everytime I glanced back I met that wild eyed look asking for mercy. "For goodness sake, stop them oxen." They were trailing along till we got to a ravine south and west from where Edward Rue's house now stands, where I noticed the wagon began to run on the two right side wheels, nearly tipping over. I then came to myself, reorganized, jumped to the other side of the box and gave oxen orders for slacking which they did at the first word. Getting up on the level east from where schoolhouse 23 (best known as the Skare schoolhouse) I noticed the wagon box had worked ahead about a foot. I stopped oxen and asked if the preacher take one side of the box, I take the other and lift it back in position. He asked, "How far is it left?" I said 2 miles north. He said, "You can be excused now, I will walk the balance. You did well. I thank you for what you have done." I said, No the orders were to bring you through and I shall do it. With a sad look and sigh he said, "Can you control those oxen, my boy?" Yes, I said, to perfection. You need not worry. "Well," he said, "I hope I will be spared such an experience I just had." We reorganized, were seated and everything went fine. But the worst was to come, although not the fault of me or the oxen.

Johannes Moe had found a nicely fit limestone, not better if made to order, about a foot wide, 3 inches thick and three feet long which he had put across over his rather low door. He had a very vicious dog, especially if one grabbed for something, there was a terrible scramble between life and death. When we got to the house it was filled with people. There was no objection getting out of the box, but when the preacher reached for his umbrella and hand grip, he had a double quick notice served on him by the dog. He ran against that overhead stone cutting a gash in his head. Leaving the hat and the dog outside, the balance of the makeup went thru the door in a cyclonic speed. Getting inside he said, "Good people, you will excuse my hurry, it is not customary to come this way, but this is an exception. Now I must be thankful to "Go that I am here now. First a pair of runaway oxen which nearly killed me and then "(pointing thru the door) dinna bitcha." Ivar Dosnum, the very first blacksmith Norway Lake ever had and I venture to say, the best one, (father of Ole Donnun and Christian J. Rustad) picked up the preacher's hat and sent the dog over the hill. They might as well have sent me over too. I laughed on that trip till I was perfectly sick and all in.

### **Over 40 Years Have Elapsed**

I was a homesteader again pioneering in Bowman county N.D. Our new church was to be dedicated by the President of the circuit, Rev. A.O. Oppegaard. When I notice that announcement I was reminded of my pioneer passenger of over 40 years ago. I stood on the steps watching him come out of church, greeted him and said, Am glad to meet you Rev. Oppegaard. He looked at me and said, "May I ask who

you are? I can not place you." I said, It is up to you to guess. He said, "I can't do it. My guess would be that I never saw you before." I said, You used to know me well. I saw you come in from Rhame station this morning riding in an automobile. But I have seen you ride in an oxmobile. He said, "Do you live around here?" I said, I am holding down a claim here near the church, but my home is at Norway Lake, Minnesota. "Oh," he said, "I know where that is, I have been there many times. I will never as long as I live forget the first time I was there, when new settlers had no horses, all drove with oxen. One settler offered me a ride and said he had fast oxen, which I found out by experience. But he said he had a good driver. That part of it I did not approve of for he certainly was a reckless kid." The he told us his story about the runaway oxen, that reckless kid, the overhead stone, and "dinna bitcha." He lifted his hat and showed us the scar in his head and said, "As long as I had a brush of hair it did not show but after my head began to grow through the hair it shows plainly." After he got thru I asked him if he knew who that reckless kid was. He said, "No, I can't tell." I put my finger to my shoulder and said, Here his is right in front of you. I am the reckless kid that drove those runaway oxen over 40 years ago and we had a good time over it. He began to apologize for telling on me. I said, You have told nothing but the plain truth.

Those from here who stood there and took it all in as near as I can remember, were Mr. and Mrs. Martin Aasen, Hilda, Axel and Carl Aasen, Ernest Johnson, not to forget Lewis Johnson. He had a schoolma'am tucked up by his side who he had induced to follow him home which she did and is the well known Mrs. Lewis W. Johnson of West Lake, Arctander.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

## 20

December 23, 1925 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

(No. 20)

ANOTHER OX-MOTOR TRIP TO MILL AND IN BLIZZARD

In the early pioneer days we did not skip to town to a grocery store to get a sack of flour when needed like now. We filled sacks of wheat and went to the mill to grind, getting flour, middlings and ban from our own wheat, the mill charging toll. Those days overshoes were not known in the country. They were a luxury used only by doctors and ministers. Moccasins were all the go. Some used them as shoes, others as boots. A handful of dry hay in the bottom kept feet wonderfully warm. Good overcoats were not known. Homemade coats out of sheepskins were begrudged by many who did not have them.

One day the flour supply was reported low and father was sickly. I was just 15 years and was full of pep. I just wished and hoped they would let me go and my wish was granted. I filled sacks in the evening and got prepared for an early start. Mother prepared a big lunch basket, but I was too kiddish to take it

along. I intended to get an early start and get home for early supper and took only 2 slices of bread with me.

At 3:00 o'clock in the morning or night rather, my pet oxen and myself were enjoying a night promenade. After going 10 miles we reached New London mill at sunrise, finding the mill closed for repairs. Piles of grists were heaped up inside and outside. Had just made up my mind to return home when I met Leonard Larson and Tallak Johnson of south of where Belgrade now is, each with a yoke of oxen. No Belgrade, no railroad then, but sparsely settled country. When they heard of the mill being closed they decided to go to the Green Lake mill, 13 miles farther south. [the Green Lake Mill would have been 3 miles from New London, not 13, perhaps a typing error] Getting such good company, I decided to go with them. Here is where mother's big lunch basket would have come handy. Had to live two days on two slices of bread. We got there quite early but did not get our grists ground till during the night. Spent the night in the mill, sitting, walking, talking and trying to sleep on sacks. Seems to me I can hear the Mur-r-r of the mill stones yet. Had with us a night companion who said he came 75 miles to Green Lake Mill to grind a load. Hauled from some place in Yellow Medicine county.

In the morning we were off again homeward bound. Getting to New London I had to part with my good companions. They went north and I went west. It was a fine lovely forenoon. But as I got to the east end of Lake Andrew I saw a roll in the air indicating another of those horrible pioneer storms starting with melting snow. I knew what it meant. Just as the storm struck me, Albert Hedin passed me with a pair of spry young horses. Then there was tears in my eyes. I wished I could get home as fast as he did. But I had to be contented with my gait. I then had six more miles home and did not see the oxen more than one time till I got home. I put away my whip, gave full control to the oxen and hung to the hind end-gate. At times I could not see the load although hanging to box. I heard a jungle of bells. Jumped on load as quick as a cat, when I saw a neck yoke, a tongue and a pair of horses' heads right over me and had the end gate broken eventually by a horse's knee. If I had not heard the bells I would have been run down and killed. Seeing there was an obstruction in the road the driver turned off and passed me. I never found out who he was. Lake Andrew was unusually long that day. Got over it and onto Mid Lake. Got over the lake to Andrew Railson's first pioneer location. He was also our postmaster. He was just doing chores. Being on the edge of grove and in a hollow it seemed as if the storm was over. He asked me to stop but I was bent for home and said, I can see the oxen now the first time since the storm hit me, and said, I can also see the sun, it's about noon. He could not make me stop. I said, I am on our timber road where we haul fence post, and rails, every day, and both the oxen and myself know the road to the rod. But if Andrew Railson had taken full charge of the oxen, given me a good whipping and sent me into the warm house, he would have conferred a great favor on me. For I didn't know what I was up against. I never have been so close death in my life. When I got on Sec. 17 over what is known as the Halvorson's Hill, south of the Halvorson Beach where the wind had a clear right of way over Norway Lake and clean sweep over them hills at a terrific rate, I could feel the wind going right thru me. I clung to the box all the time but my fingers now got numb and stiff. I had to cling to box with one hand and pound the other to keep blood in circulation. I lost my grip and was not able to catch up again and was wondering at the gait the oxen took. I did not realize the real fact that the oxen kept their common gait. The fault was with myself. I was so completely tuckered out and was not able to keep up any more. First only two

slices of bread in two days. No restaurants then. Then all that traveling and a sheepskin coat that was too large for me, making walking very difficult. To add to the difficulty the wool on the coat filled with ice and snow to the skin, making it quite a luggage. The worst of it was I was overcome with a heavy drowsy feeling. Had only one desire, that to lie down and go to sleep and that would have been the finish. I am not in shape to check up or analyze the human mechanism, but I have been so far I know by experience and am confident that freezing to death is an easy death. You get exhausted and tuckered out. You can not resist that drowsy sleep. You have only one desire in spite of anything and everything, you will lie down to sleep and that is the finish. You will not know you are dying.

That was the point I had gotten to when I was happily surprised to hear father's voice. In spite of his sickness he had by the aid of a long stick in both hands been able to trail the road one mile in midwinter. The roads were on level with the surface of the snow, so no snow lodged in the road. That was the way he trace it and that was the way the oxen could keep the road. He said he had just stopped with the intention to return when the oxen butted up against him and he stopped them, knowing the outfit. But he was horrified to see they came without a driver. He shouted and I heard him and answered but being hard of hearing he did not hear me. I finally staggered up to the sleigh. Father was then crying, both over joy to see me coming and for blaming himself for sending me off. I said, It is not your fault, I wanted to go. He said, "Get up on the load and I'll take the oxen." The storm was so fierce we could hardly see each other. I said, "I can not go on the load. I am nearly frozen now. He took the lee side of the wind and said, "Hang onto the box like I do and follow my steps." That way step by step we got home. But if it had been half a mile farther, I would not have gotten home alive. My feet would absolutely not carry me up any more and if I had gone on the load I would have perished there. We were living in a thick grove. Getting in there we did not notice the storm a bit, only heavy snowing. I walked up to give the oxen their usual petting, but they were covered with a blanket of snow and ice a couple inches thick. I went in front of them and the only way by which I could know them was by their horns. It puzzled me how they could find the road as their eyes were large balls of snow and ice and icicles 6 or 7 inches long were hanging down from their mouths. I took a good look at them and said, Good old heroes! You have done well. Making a review of the trip from start to finish was too much for my boyish feelings and tears ran down my chin and I went weeping into the house!

Such was the early old settlers pioneering. They did not step into an enclosed truck cab to keep feet comfortable over a warm engine, or into an auto coupe or sedan to press the button for a 30-miles an hour speed. They had to be satisfied with the old settlers pioneer speed of 3 miles an hour. Neither did they come over graveled roads and cement pave highways in shining and glittering outfits into this country. They came via the old settlers ox-mobile route on detours along the mire and pull system. They worried, worked and suffered so that the now growing generation can reap the fruit of their struggles in shape of well equipped farm homes and uptodate modern houses. If the early settlers and pioneers of Kandiyohi county had made memorandums of their early struggles and experiences it would make a great volume of pioneering memories. The compiling of the Kandiyohi County History was a valuable work, hardly enough appreciated but it will increase in value as time goes on. The growing up generation of today should not be allowed to let the old settlers and pioneers struggles go into oblivion.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

## 21

December 30, 1925 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

HAULING WHEAT TO WILLMAR

--From Radius of Many Miles--

Rows in the Street

(No. 21)

[Includes a picture entitled "Scene on Pacific Avenue, Willmar, in Early Days—From an old photo". Shows several ox carts with loads of grain on them.]

It was a hardship in those early pioneer days to raise grain, comparing the devices of farming those days with our great improvements of today. And it was nearly as much of a hardship to get rid of a load as it was to raise it in the first place. No grain elevators were known those days. They had what was called grain houses, commonly known as Flathouses by the railroad track. A bridge running up to the gable 20 to 25 feet up. A hopper placed on a scale. The grain weighed in the hopper, then the latter run on rail track in to be dumped in different bins. We did not know of No. 1, 2, 3, 4 and "rejected",--in those days wheat was wheat. This kind of unloading was a very slow process. Farmers would be standing on Pacific avenue at Willmar 4 to 5 hours to wait for their turn to unload, watching every jerk for each load to go in. There was hardly a day without a fight and scramble of some kind. After cooling off on the street they finished their torture by going up in the air about 25 feet, picking up and untying every sack at a temperature of 15 to 20 below zero when the airing came to a finishing touch. But after the elevators were put on the market they did away with that bridge. Elevators were run by horse power, several at each station. If the farmer could not unload at one, he could go to another. If not at one station, go to the next. But not so in those early days. That slow process was a hardship. Farmers coming in in strings from 30 to 40 miles on each side of the new railroad. No Milwaukee road on the south nor Soo road to the north, making Willmar a great point for business.

One time just before Christmas in 1872, I loaded up a load of wheat to take to Willmar, and tried to get a very early start so as to get ahead of the rush. But found that others had made the same calculations. On the road I came in company with two townsmen, Andrias Peekhaugen and Hendrik Larson. When we got across the railroad track on 7<sup>th</sup> Street West and Pacific avenue, we were stalled. There was a string of teams from 7<sup>th</sup> St. West to the grain house opposite 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. A large string from Stearns county and local farmers. Under those conditions we had to patiently watch every jerk for about five hours. Next to us came a long string of about thirty teams from Renville county. That was the first farmers organization I ever knew of, which we found out before the fun was over. They had a long rope with them from the

straw stacker of a horse power threshing machine. Their leader was an overgrown Solung by the name of Per Gjere, and the whole bunch were said to be Solungers, Knut, oldest son of Pioneers Mr. and Mrs. Ole Knutson of Arctander, was attending school in Willmar. Being Saturday there was no school. He spied me when there was only a couple teams left ahead of me, got on to my load, and the result was a good neighborly conversation. Having coat collar well up, I did not see what was going on, when I heard a thundering shout, "High! Wake up there! If you let those men in, you will not see sunset." I pulled down my collar and soon realized the situation. Three teams coming in only 4 miles were trying to wedge in the open space ahead of me, one man holding each of my horses. The third was trying to wedge in the three teams. I had a pair of hard dogskin driving mittens on. I gave the lines to Knut and said, "here is the whip. Whip up and crowd in position if you can." The first act was a jump to the ground. The second act was a jump and an aim for a big nose, the property of a large six-footer, and hit so the blood was squirting. He let go of the horse as also did the other man and Knut was on his job and got my team into position. Just then a cordwood stick was swimming over my head. Sivert Olson of Eagle Lake, a war veteran, and one of the most respected settlers, got him by the arm and said, "Throw that stick, you know you've done wrong. Those men have been standing on the streets all day awaiting their turn and here you come in only four miles and aim right for the house." Per Gjere shouted, "Give him another one, kid! I'll stand by you. I can handle all three of them." Just then a big German marshal came waddling along, accompanied by Sheriff Stoner. Then I said to myself, "Now you're ripe, kid!" and gave Per Gjere a boyish look as much as to say, "Can you handle them two?" Willmar must then have had about 400 population and I believe every soul was on the scene. The marshal laid his hand on my shoulder and I said to myself, "There you go, kid!" But the marshal gave me a one-eyed wink, a great German grin and said, 'You did well, kid; you should have given him another one. He has done that trick before." The sheriff approved of it with a good hearty laugh. Now I was feeling better. I knew I had Sivert Olson, the marshal, the sheriff and Per Gjere and his whole band behind us on my side. The officers then marked my sleigh No. 1 and then continuing along the line ordering those intruders to the rear to find their number somewhere above the 30 mark. My load was soon disposed of. I put away my team while Peekhaugen and Larson were unloading. There being quite a little excitement. I went up the bridge. Gjere's load was at delivery and from a previous clash he got his weight good and plenty. But the trouble was, the next two loads also belonged to him. He watched the doings and when he heard bushels and pounds, he rolled out a volley of oratory seasoned with something too rich to be put in print, and concluded by saying, 'You stole three bushels from that load." Then he reached over and got him by the collar pulling him over the hopper across his box to the railing. By this time three men came running dragging a long rope. A loop was made and put on one of his feet, then sent him over the railing a height of about 25 feet. Then followed a great excitement. Some shouted, "You have the rope on the wrong end." While so dangling between earth and sky, I believe he tried to mention everything in the Bible and outside in about a second and his vocal demonstrations one who heard never forgot. Senator A.E. Rice and Senator A.B. Robbins and a few more were instrumental in getting the sinner down to the ground, when he cleared himself of the rope in a hurry, scooted off in a southeasterly direction, hatless and coatless. To judge by his start one might think he is on the run yet. He was never seen or heard of in Willmar since. Believe his name was Crosby. Sen. A.B. Robbins who I believe was station agent at the time, had to take charge of grain delivery temporarily.

The owner of the Pacific Hotel had a bunch of half-starved hogs running at large and while all this went on, they got up into one of the Renville gang loads, tore a sack and were helping themselves to its contents from the ground, when Leader Gjere was notified. He responded promptly, jerked the neckyoke from the team and killed half of the hogs right there on the street, just where the R.R. park is now. The owner appeared but Gjere told him to keep at respectable distance, if he did not like to see stars. Many yet remember those dead hogs laying on streets all winter on Pacific avenue.

Being too late to go home that night, I put up at Glarum's Hotel. Just across the street there was one of those desirable places where a person too cold could warm up and one too warm could cool off. On the side of the sign coming in from the country was marked "First Chance Saloon." But it was best known as "Little Hell on Smoky Row" (a nickname for Third Street), which indicated that the bigger hells were more centrally located and there was said to be seven of them.

After supper I heard an unusual flurry and noise. I looked out, saw people coming from all directions, all headed for "Little Hell," so I thot when everybody goes I must go also. Getting to the opening I was anxious to see what it looked like inside. I elbowed my way through and found Leader Gjere giving a demonstration. Dividing the house by a mark from the wall to the counter, inviting and challenging any one who wished to step over the mark. He then had all his men behind him trying to tell each other's fortune thru the bottom of the glass. One of the white apron brigade was seen running out the rear door evidently to call the police. After a while police and sheriff appeared in the crowd exchanging looks the same as to say, "Do you dare? I don't." Gjere invited the man in his dignity wearing a star to come across and he would show him genuine stars, if he never had seen them before. I then at this juncture decided I had seen enough and went to the hotel. But I could hear them over across the street. They were jubileeing all night. Nobody dare to put them out. They didn't crow in the morning, it then being quiet. They had done the crowing in the evening. This was one day's experience of delivering grain in Willmar in pioneer days.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

## 22

January 13, 1926 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

HAULING GRIST FROM KINGSTON IN 1860

(22)

[Has a picture entitled "OLD PIONEERS OF THE COUNTY Mr. and Mrs. Gunder Swenson"]

Gunder Swenson was 81 years young on Jan. 16, and his better half is a few years younger. She became his wife at the age of 17. All those remaining left now of the early settlers before the Indian outbreak are



Gunder Swenson and Hans Petterson, Norway Lake, and Mrs. Osmundson, Gunder Swenson's sister, staying with her daughter Mrs. Nellie Norin at Willmar. She is 85 years old. She can relate glimpses from the early pioneer days.

At age of 16 in 1860, Gunder worked a whole summer for 15 bushels of wheat, working for a Mr. Jones at Acton, Meeker county. Jones was killed by the Indians at his Acton home, one of the very first victims of the outbreak. Those 15 bushels of wheat and the proceeds of trapping was what they had to depend on for a year's living. There being no mill either at New London or Green Lake at the latter part of November, 1860, Gunder and his father, Swen Borgen, went to the nearest mill at Kingston, Meeker county, to grind those 15 bushels. Kingston mill was filled to over-capacity with grinding for two weeks ahead. They then proceeded to Fairhaven where they got their grist ground. Returning they were caught in one of those severe old time snowstorms. They fortunately struck the home of Halvor Kjorn, and were happily surprised to learn that he was one of Borgen's old chums and boyhood friends from Hallingdah, Norway. He lived southwest of Forest City. The storm and snowfall was so fierce that they could not get their oxen and load home. Halvor said, "I have stable-room and hay. I will keep your oxen until you see fit to take them home, and you can go home on skis, which they did. After three weeks Gunder went to finish their job. He started off following another trail but was up against another storm. Finally he got to Gates' place at Diamond Lake where he stopped the first night. Mr. Gates was the first superintendent of schools in Kandiyohi county. The next day he followed a poor trail. When near Wheeler's at Diamond Lake he lost the road and the young oxen were exhausted. In trying to urge the oxen along, Wheeler's dog began barking and an instinct-like that told the oxen there were people close by and they put the last of their strength, so to say, in action. The Wheelers also heard someone was out in the snow and went and helped him through and he stopped there the second night. Got an early start next morning to try to reach the townsite of Columbia (now Spicer.) When he got to J.W. Burdick's place, the snow was melting and the oxen were tired out. In the morning, when he wanted to start, the sleigh was frozen to the ground. His oxen were not able to budge it. Burdick said, "Unhitch your young oxen. I have a pair of heavy good pullers. I'll take it out for you." But they could not stir it. So they put on all four oxen and got it out, a perfect lump of frozen ice and snow, on account of the melting the previous night. There were no runners in view. There he had to leave the wagon box to lessen the heft of the load, and laid the grist on a few boards. The father at home by this time had started out on skis to see if he could locate his son and found him at Burdick's. The next night they arrived at T. Thompson's and Sam Stoner, his brother-in-law's place, somewhere near Nest Lake. They were glad to see them come, and asked, "What have you for load?" They answered, "Flour." They were rejoiced and told them they were Godsend's. They were out of flour, and had hardly anything to eat. "We have organized with five yoke of oxen to try to open up to Kingston, but our families must have something to live on until we come back." Borgen was glad for a double reason to accommodate them. First to be able to render them a favor and then to lessen the load a couple hundred pounds. They, Thompson's, were to bring the wagon box from Burdick's to this place. From there they went in a northwesterly direction, aiming for the east end of Lake Andrew, knowing by that they could go on ice about 4 miles, eliminating all that snow shoveling at low places. They got across Lake Andrew, Mud Lake and Norway Lake to Thos. Osmundson's log cabin, on what is now Halvorson's beach, the log cabin I mentioned in a previous article, which was burned by the Indians, and where the Indians marked Osmundson's wagon with bullet holes. Now they had only a couple miles

home, but the oxen were too tired, and could not make it, so they stopped over night at Osmundson's. They reached home on the fifth day after Gunder started with the load from the place of Halvor Kjorn, Meeker county.

#### PIONEER KID

(Continued)

## 23

January 13, 1926 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

THE STORM OF FIFTY-SEVEN YEARS AGO

23

[This article was published on the same day as the previous article. A picture titled "OLD PIONEERS OF THE COUNTY, Mr. and Mrs. Gunder Swenson." accompanied these two articles. ]

It was in the winter of 1872-73, January 7<sup>th</sup>, a fine beautiful morning which lure so many out on their routine doings. Some to town, some for wood and hay and some for visiting. Even Railson, being the first to bring a little horse power threshing machine in to this country, was also the first to bring in to this country a steam threshing outfit. Threshing that year was a rather slow process. Owing to a fairly good crop and few machines some was left till after the holidays. On the said January 7<sup>th</sup> I made up a load of grist to go to the Swift Falls Mill, Swift Co., as the New London Mill was overcrowded. Starting off that beautiful morning I overtook Gunder Swenson and Halvor Hande, both armed with pitchforks to go over to help Even Railson thresh his grain, the finishing job. I proceeded on. Getting to Andrias Jorgenson's now the home of his son Olaus Jorgenson, near what is now Sunburg (no Sunburg then.) I stopped to spear a good dinner. After a good dinner for myself and team I started off over the wild prairie in a northwesterly direction towards Camp Lake, then west 3 miles where the Swift Falls mill was located on Sec. 3, Town of Camp Lake, a distance of about 12 miles. On that stretch there were only 3 settlers along the road—Hendrik Sagedalen, Mrs. Ellingboe and Tosten Kvamme. My road went northwest from Sagadalen's, another going west to three other settlers—Ole Sondroll and two brothers, Iver and Ole Gronseth. Starting from Jorgenson's it was very mild and snow was melting. Then it began snowing very heavily. Snowflakes about the size of quarter dollars melted as fast as they reached the ground. On the prairie I met a bunch of cattle —about 20 head belonging to Hendrik Sagedalen. They were enjoying the fine weather, nipping grass on the prairie. A little further on I passed the two brothers, Ivar and Ole Gronseth with each a yoke of oxen and load of wood. I turned northwest from where the Kvamme schoolhouse now stands. From there they were to go west about 1 1/2 miles. Getting along about a mile I noticed in the air something like a huge roll of gray wool coming at a terrific speed. I could feel cold gushes and began to shake the water off from my robe, preparing for a bad storm. Just like slamming two hands together I was in a blinding snowstorm. I could not see the horses

or anything else, not even the lines in my hands. My first attempt and aim was to turn the horses around and get back to Jorgenson's. No use for me to try to guide the horses—had to let them take their own course. Hanging over front end of the box to see if I could see the road. I could not even see the whipple trees. They were willing to return and I could tell by their feet that they were on the hard road. All of a sudden my horses came to an abrupt stop. I was up against Ivar Gronseth's oxen. We had a hard time passing each other. We could talk to each other, but not see each other. I said, You better unhitch, leave loads and get oxen home. You will not get thru with loads against this weather. But they said, "We must have wood or our folks will freeze to death." Ole took the bridle off my horse and got me safe by his load. They then proceeded west and made it to Ivar Gronseth's, a mile and a half. Here Ole had only 80 rods home. Ivar said, "you must not go, Ole; you will never make it in this weather." But Ole said, "The cattle are out, besides that I have sickness in the family. I must go." He started but never got home. Himself and his oxen froze to death.

Standing in front of the Swift Falls store you can see a hill which from that time to this day has been know as (Enkebakken) Widow's Hill, because a widow's son, Gullik Olson, froze to death. He was going to get a load of wood at Camp Lake and both himself and oxen froze to death. He evidently had gone up with the storm from the west and getting over the top went down on the east side into deep loose snow where exhausted and tuckered out, had fallen in the last sleep. The whole neighborhood was aroused and a search was made for many days. But it had to be given up. Altho it was known well he was not very far off. After about ten weeks had elapsed they noticed a hole in the snowdrift on east side of that hill lined with dog's hair frozen to snow, which indicated that his faithful dog had laid by him for some time until he had left him and got to one of the houses by the mill. By digging they found Olson's body after laying there for several weeks.

A Mrs. Mathias Johnson was home all alone with her little baby. The chimney caught fire, the house burnt down. All she could save was a quilt to put around the baby. She walked barefooted in the snow to a neighbor. Being that there was thick brush on both sides of road she was guided along. She lingered three or four days but died from the exposure. The baby grew up to be a wife, a mother and is now a grandmother.

Myself, after parting with the Gronseth's gavefull navigation to the horses. Fearing there would be a big snow drift at edge of Jorgenson's grove, which I found to be the fact in due time, I could not do a thing only give the horses the lines, leaving everything to them. I could hear by the sound of their feet that they were on the hard road. Soon the horses balked. I understood Al was up against the above mentioned bunch of cattle who all froze to death. Getting to Jorgenson' grove I had a hard tussel to get thru a snow drift about three feet deep and about 20 feet across. Getting thru there the horses made good to the stable, where they had their dinner feed. On getting there we found Andrias Jorgenson and son Joe A. Jorgenson were busy caring for their stock. I asked if they had room for the horses. They said they had not room for a calf! But something must be done. We could talk to each other but not see each other. After getting the horses in, we hung clotheslines to be guided by between house and stables. The storm raged without any letup for three days and three nights. The fourth morning was clear and blistering cold—about 30 below zero. Going home from there I could drive over fences and everywhere, snow being packed and frozen.

Now back to the beginning about Even Railson's threshing. When the snow storm struck them, Gunder Swenson and Halvor Hande started for home, but getting beyond the grove found it impossible. Swenson was well acquainted and knew by finding an old rail fence that they could follow it to the stables of his brother-in-law, Christoffer Engen, and then to the house. Swenson had a young wife of eighteen at home and a baby boy who today answers the roll call of Sven G. Swenson. But had a good chore man (Erick Mehus) and found himself at home with his sister. Halvor Hande had a wife and small children at home and it was a hard job for them to keep Hande from going. He said, "It's only a mile. I can make it." But the fact was that not one out of a hundred could have done it without fences or anything to go by. They stayed there those long three days and three nights. In that cold still morning they returned to their respective home, finding all well under the circumstances. Mrs. Halvor Hande, their oldest daughter Barbro (now Mrs. Jens Skaalerud) and the oldest son, Knute, had proven themselves equal to the occasion.

While I am at it, lest I forget, Halvor Hande and family left Valdres, Norway, and landed in Rice county where they remained a year. The next year Hande sent his family aboard train for the new road and new Foot Lake station (Willmar). Their destination was his brother's, Nels Hande, homestead on what is now the Ekren place. Not getting the cow on the passenger train he waved goodbye to his family, tied a rope on the cow's horns, and thus the two paraded one at each end of the rope from Rice county clear to Norway Lake in Monongalia county. I said once, It must have been a tedious journey, "Oh, no," he said, "The cow was a fast walker, a good leader and I got over the road faster than those going with oxen and covered wagons, and driving cattle with them. I had bread with me, milked the cow and lived well. Sometimes with shelter over head at nights, sometimes sleeping in the open. The only disadvantage was the mosquitos which were a plague beyond all limit."

The husky young men of today would not think of making such a parading experience. But Halvor Hande did. Anyone attempting to get ahead of a Valdresen must get up early in the morning.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

## 24

January 27, 1926 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

THE VARMLANDDINGS OF MAMRE

(24)

[Included in the article is a picture of "John Rodman, Born Aug. 26, 1823: died Oct. 20, 1908".]

The patrons of the newly established Norway Lake Postoffice comprised the inhabitants of what is now Colfax, Norway Lake, Arctander and Mamre townships. Those from a distance were Big Grove, Stearns

county, Lake Johanna, Pope county, Six Mile Grove, Swift county and the colony to the west along Minnesota and Chippewa rivers.

As previously mentioned, Andrew Railson was our first pioneer postmaster to whose place we went to get our mail every other Saturday to begin with. Here the news was exchanged from the different colonies. One Saturday in the fall of '67, a man introducing himself as John P. Rodman, spoke up and asked me how far I had to go to get my mail. I said three miles. He said he was worse off having ten miles. Another said "That's nothing, I came 25 miles to get mail for the Six-Mile Grove colony." In Swift county John P. Rodman held the distinction of being the very first settler and Kaiser of the whole Township of Mamre. As he went in the same direction, we were in company those three miles. I took a liking to Mr. Rodman. He asked me to come over some day and call on him. The next morning, being Sunday morning and fine weather, I decided to go and call on my friend in his loneliness, and found him at his home at the place he had selected for his home in a grove by a lake. He was a lay-preacher. I found him sitting on the sunny side of his cabin reading in his Bible. He was very much pleased to have someone call on him, he said. His family was left in Sweden. He put his finger on the first verse of Chapter 18 of Genesis which reads; "And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre; and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day." Then he said, "I will name this grove of mine Mamrelund and the lake, Mamre Lake, and that name stuck to the place ever since, and when the township in due time was organized it was organized as the Township of Mamre. This is the origin of the name of said township. Mr. Rodman was a Varmlanning. His family joined him the next year, also two more families, Johan Hedman and family and Nels Abrahamson Sr. and family. He advised his Varmland friends of Sweden what an Eden he had found and soon the whole township was in full charge and control of Varmlanningar—a thrifty set of people, industrious, hard working, straight and honest, as a rule in all their dealings. It took all kinds of Norwegians of the different bygdelags to hold down their part. But Varmlanningarne held down their town in good shape and increased rapidly. One time I tried to take an enumeration of all the Holmgrens, but when I reached 50, I gave it up. But Storholmen said there should be 72, not to mention all other Varmland names. At the time Stor-Okeson came from the old country, I was baggage master and warehouse man at the Willmar depot some 45 years ago. I remember his embarrassment and peril when I began to check off his baggage. How he tried in all manners conceivable to make me understand and to make himself understood and when I turned my language into Scandinavian, how glad and satisfied he was. He told me he had reached his destination, but had only one dollar to go on in this country with, and his family left in Sweden. But Stor-Okeson has done well with his dollar. It was not long till he got his family after him and in a Varmlanning's industrious way forged his way thru and prosperity crowned his efforts. Have had business transactions nearly at every home in Mamre and hold the Mamre Varmlannings in highest esteem. When I wanted to hear some good singing and good talks I went to Mamre and when it came to good feed I was never disappointed at Mamre. But generations come and go. If I should make a roll call today of my old pioneer friends, not many would respond. I must take detour over to the cemetery. There I will find carved in granite blocks the names so familiar to me. The ground is cold, the grave is cold, the granite block is cold, but the memories and names are still warm. The best tribute I know of is to refer to the Varmlanning Swedish Nightingale, Jennie Lind. Some years ago some 20,000 people gathered in the old Castle Garden, New York, to hear Jennie Lind sing as no other songstress ever had sung, the sublime compositions of

Beethoven, Handel, etc. Finally she thought of her home, paused and seemed to fold her wings for a higher flight. She began with a deep emotion to pour forth. "Home Sweet Home." The audience could not stand it. An uproar of applause stopped the singing. Tears gushed from those thousands like rain. Beethoven and Handel were forgotten. After a moment the song came again seemingly as from heaven, almost angelic. She was homesick, longing back home to where her cradle had stood and where she first stammered her songs on her mother's knee.

## PIONEER KID

(Continued)

# 25

February 3, 1926 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

INCIDENTS FROM THE GREAT SNOWSTORM OF 1873

(25)

[Article contains a picture of "Rev.L.J. Markhus A Pioneer Pastor Who Was Lost in the Storm and Never fully Recovered from the Exposure."]

In a previous article I told about the fierce blizzard of 1872. I shall give my experience in another just like it, one year later in 1873. Another of those fine beautiful mornings which proved so treacherous, luring people out in their different occupations. I loaded up a load of wheat and went to Willmar. The weather was mild and the snow was melting. At about one o'clock a telegram arrived at Willmar from Fargo with advice to "Prepare for storm." This caused a confusion and rush and running in all directions. From the experience of the previous year, I was not slow about getting my team into a barn, most of the others rushed for home. Rev. L. J. Markhus wanted to go home in the worst way and wanted me to go with him for company. He was so insistant that I finally consented, thinking that the road is so good we can make good time. This decision nearly cost the life of both of us. He started off with one horse and cutter ahead of me, I had a team and sleigh. About 2 o'clock we were caught in a horrible blizzard. Just like the one of the previous year, if not worse. It started with heavy melting snow, turning into extremely cold and a thick roaring storm. We did not see each other any more. I could not see my team. I shouted and asked if his horse was a good road keeper, otherwise I could go ahead. I heard his voice but not what he said, and were then lost to each other.

I was now left to myself in this great peril. I had in my mind to try and watch when horses climbed the bank up from Swan Lake in Sec.36, Township Dovre, which in due time I did. I was very well acquainted on that place. I knew that about 80 rods to the east, I would find the home of Gunder Gunderson. But to switch the horses off from the homebound road was a big risk. Horses would then naturally depend on

my lines which was beyond my ability to guide. I could not see horses. When I laid hands on them everything froze stiff, as that storm also started with melting snow. I took the lines, tied them on harnesses, took down the halters to lead horses, which was very difficult, as horses walked too fast, nearly tumbling me down. My compass was the storm. When I had the wind on my left chin and walked right ahead, I knew I would find a rail fence, as I did. I tied the horses to fence, and laid the blankets on them. Being so well acquainted on the place, I knew that about ten rods north of the gate was a very thick plum tree thicket which I found. Then knowing that it was not over four rods to the house and wind blowing direct in that direction, I shouted at the top of my voice thinking they might hear me. But no result. I now concluded something must be done. Could not stay here. Knowing that the wind blew in direction of the house, I might come so close they may hear me. I left the fence and plum thicket and went with the wind. The first thing I knew I went head first into a hole like a cellar. The wind had whipped the snow back from house, leaving the ground bare. When I got up I had my hand against northwest corner of house, but could not see it although holding my hand against it. I now followed to the right. I passed the window, got to the southwest corner of the house and to door on the south side. Storm had overtaken us about 2 o'clock. When I rapped on the door, Gunderson said, "Oh, are you coming now?" thinking it was Maria, his wife. She was a nurse and responded to calls night and day. She had been called towards Green Lake and they expected her home every minute. I was a perfect chunk of snow and ice, beyond recognition, until I gave my identity, and asked if they had room for my team, if we can find them. One of the boys said, "There is not room for a cat." But Gunderson said, "Something must be done." I said, if we only can find the horses. Think they are somewhere near the gate. There happened to be a clothesline fastened at the southeast corner of the house, fastened onto some large burr-oak trees, but not long enough to reach the stable. They happened to have a new line in house, and we spliced them and got to the stable. Now finding the horses was the next thing. We knew they should be by the fence not over 4 rods from the stable. Gunderson was placed by the stable, three of us went against the storm not any further than we could shout and hear each other. We found the horses and by Gunderson's voice found the stable and got them crowded into safety. We followed clothesline to the house. This storm also last furiously for 3 days and 3 nights. We could give the stock some hay but no water. The readers can realize better than I can explain the terror striking the folks of that home, knowing positively that if the wife & mother was caught in the storm, she should perish. Dederik was the cook and was found equal to the job. We ran out of coffee but had milk and cows in the stable. So went those horrible three days and three nights. On the fourth morning it was still and clear but blistering cold, something like 30 below zero. I would not leave my good entertainers until we found out the fate of Maria. A Mr. Jacobson, oldest brother of Dr. Jacobs of Willmar, was the party to bring Mrs. Gunderson home and were on their way as was thought. They drove up against what they thought was a straw stack. Maria got out and clung to straw stack following around to the south side with no other chances in her mind than to freeze to death. She was happily surprised to find an open door and it proved to be a straw stable full of stock, where she was safe. When the farmer came to see to his stock he found her and brother to the house to safety. Jacobson tried to unhitch, but his horses became unruly, turned with the wind and were lost and froze to death. This was about 2:30. Jacobson also was lost and wandered about until dark, when he observed something like a star. That was a lamp light thru a farmer's window. He got in and saved his life, but he froze his feet so his limbs had to be amputated below the knees.

People yet remember Jacobson who walked on his knees the rest of his life over a period of about 40 years.

While I aimed for Gunderson's to the right, Rev. L.J. Markhus aimed for a farm house to the left, Halvor Sondreson's, not very far from the road. He tied the horse to a tree, put on him what blankets and robes he had and tried to find the house, but became lost. He wandered about all that afternoon, all next night until about ten o'clock next morning when he had got onto the lake, found a watering place where stock were watered. The loose snow being blown away, the cattle trail tramped down and packed formed a ridge. Crawling on hands and knees he managed to get to the stable where he got inside and when the farmer came to see to his stock, he found Rev. Markhus there with the cattle and brot him to the house, more dead than alive. He asked for boiled milk which he got, but knew no limit of drinking. They had to refuse him at last. He pulled through, but was not a robust man anymore and died in the fall of 1885. Whether the horse pulled thru or perished, I do not remember. Most likely it lived thru as he stood in a low place in a thick grove and was well blanketed.

(To be continued)

## 26

PIONEER KID.

February 17, 1926 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

THE BIG STORM OF 1873

(Continued)

No.26

When I finally got home from that trip I found that Ellef Briskemyr and his son Helge, a good companion of mine, had left for Kerhoven with one horse and cutter that fine morning. Also his son Ivar Briskemyr who was married and had a family. The old gentleman was the owner and lived on the old Norway Lake fort grounds. Ivar lived on what is now the Ole P. Finstad's home. The old man was an uncle of the wellknown pioneer, Ole Skiness, who lives near Kerkhoven, and Ivar and Helge were cousins of him. Ivar drove with team and sleigh. Mrs. Halvor E. Soland, a merchant's wife accompanied him to Kerkhoven. Mrs. Soland was a sister of the well known pioneer A.H. Espelien, who lived as a retired farmer for some time in New London, where he died a short time ago. While in Kerkhoven her sister-in-law, Mrs. Ole E. Soland, a merchants wife of Kerkhoven, 25, made up her mind to accompany her sister-in-law, Mrs. Halvor Soland home that fine day for a visit in the country, and they started off and crossed the Swift County line on the west broders of Township of Mamre. From experience I know there are two kinds of horses, and the same applies to oxen. Both faithful and true but different in instinct. One kind are so faithful to their master's lines that they yield to the least pull of lines in spite of road. The one



horse saved many a life, the other caused much misery. It appears that when the great storm overtook the party returning from Kerkhoven, the horses instead of taking to right at the forking of road to lead them to section 36 of Township of Norway Lake, took to the left, following the Sunburg road north. Not knowing where they were going they landed in Sec. 8, Township of Arctander, many miles off their destination, and ran up against a rail fence between the homes of Fingal Helgeson and Jacob E. Ramstad. The men tied the horses to the fence and tucked up their passengers the best they could. Then they followed the fence thinking it might bring them to some farm yard. They got away from the fence and were lost. Ellef and Ivar then tramped around aimlessly, while Helge, 16 years, and the ladies were left in the sleigh. The two men finally ran up against the house of Jacob E. Ramstad, where they were taken in and received good care. The old gentleman was in the habit of dressing well and was thus protected, escaping injury. But Ivar lost all the toes on both feet. They could now tell of the predicament of the poor victims left in the sleigh. But they did not know where the sleigh was left and no help could be rendered to take one step from the house as that was at the risk of life. In that condition they had to spend those terrible three days and three nights, all the time having those in sleigh and horses in mind. Helge had died some time during the night and Mrs. Ole Soland of Kerkhoven passed away after day break in the morning. There Mrs. Halvor Soland was left between the two bodies the rest of the time. On the fourth morning, still, but blistering cold, those at the house could see the rig from the house. Hurrying to the rescue, one said, "I suppose they are all dead." Then Mrs. Havlor Soland raised her arm and waved it to show that she was still alive. How she could survive those nights and days alone between two frozen companions was nothing short of a miracle. She was brot to the hospital home of Jacob Ramstad, where she remained for a long time and received the best of treatment possible to render her. After she was taken home, I was anxious to find out about my good companion, Helge. She said the last she heard from him, he was saying his Lord's prayer, and concluded by saying, "Now I am dying." Mrs. Soland lost both hands to the wrist and part of her feet. She lived on that place about thirty years, after which the family moved to Roseau county, Minn. Most likely she has passed on by this time.

One man was found froze to death not far from a farm house on the Roseville prairie.(\*1)

Two farmers(\*2) from south of Willmar went to the Green Lake mill with a yoke of oxen each to grind, were caught in the storm and wandered about. At day break they heard a rooster crowing, followed in that direction and found they were near a farm house, where they were relieved. One of them pulled thru with marks and scars for life. The other had to have amputation of limbs and died. Erick Anderson Hogmoe of Lake Lillian, an intimate chum of mine, had been to the lake timber after a load of wood. He managed to get home, unhitched his oxen but lost them before he got to the stable door. He managed to find the house and saved his life. Two brothers by the name of Strand (\*3) both with yokes of oxen hitched to loads of wood froze to death. One of them was the father and the other the uncle of Rev. J.S. Strand of Benson.

Erick Hogmoe's oxen had gotten down into a ravine and stuck in deep loose snow where they were covered over with the snow. Their "fascinator" was cold but they escaped the fury of the fierce storm and pulled through with their yoke on. I heard of another yoke of oxen with yoke on in similar condition but can not tell the details. The name Johnson was connected but whether that was the owner or some one rescuing them I do not remember.

A couple years after these tragedies I went to put up machinery of some kind for John Maher, eight miles south of Willmar. He pointed out to me the place where 5 men with 3 teams coming from Renville with loads of wheat heading for Willmar were caught in the storm; how they unloaded, made sort of barracks from the wheat sacks, turned boxes upside down to make it as much of a shelter as circumstances would allow, and tied the horses to sleigh. At daybreak one morning, one of the five, supposing the other four were dead, made up his mind to take the chance of leaving and walking around. He could at least keep himself warm. He got into a plowed field. Being well acquainted, he knew it must be the field of John Maher and knew by following a furrow it would lead to John Maher's stables. Walking, sometimes crawling, he got to the stables and to house and was saved, telling about the death of the other four. On that cold still morning they found one of the men still alive, took him to Willmar and to St. Paul as soon as the road was cleared, for amputation of limbs but he died. Four men and six horses perished. The one man rescued (\*4) I believe lives yet, a cripple for the rest of his life. His home is at Olivia.

Not very far west from there Mike Dowling, a name familiar to everybody, age 16, went out on the prairie to round up stock, was caught in the storm and wandered aimlessly about. He happened to run up against a pile of split stove wood, by which he knew very well he was close to some house. He began picking up and throwing sticks violently in all directions with the aim of getting attention if he hit the house, which he did. The folks came out shouting and led him to safety. But he was crippled up, losing hands and feet for life. Dowling was a wonderful man. Altho crippled, he pushed himself right along to the front. There is not any doubt in my mind but what if he had lived longer we could have seen him Governor of Minnesota. He died some time ago, and a Dowling Memorial in shape of an institution for cripples is a household word and very properly so. Dowling was an ardent Republican. But politics should not cut any figure in a move of charity like that, but should appeal to the most tender strings of sympathy of every loyal citizen.

The path and trail of the old settlers and early pioneers did not vend through a park of flowers and roses, neither were their roads cemented and paved. They were rough and tough, and the ranks of early settlers who went over them have been thinning out rapidly and the few remaining will soon hand in their credentials. Let's put this on print for the benefit of the now growing generation.

PIONEER KID.

(Continued)

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(\*1). William H. Crump, whose dead body was found within 10 rods of R.C. Benton's house.

(\*2). Lars Nelson and Peter Tell. The former died at Willmar Jan. 23, following the amputation of his limbs, being too late to save his life.

(\*3). Claus and Jorgen Strand. The former was the father of Mrs. Johanna Johnson and John C. Strand of Willmar.

(\*4). Michael Holden. His story of the story of the tragedy is told in detail in the Roseland department of the Kandiyohi History.—The Editor.

## 27

March 3, 1926 Willmar Tribune

### OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

#### THE HARDANGER HEROINE

(27)

I am coming back to Sec. 36, Dovre, my place of refuge in that severe storm where I stopped over with Gunder Gunderson and his two sons, Dedrik and Martin. The place is now the home of Ole E. Olson, and is a historical place from the Indian outbreak in 1862. In the early days there was much to see and much to hear. I may say that I differed some from the most of the pioneer kids in the way of observation, inquisitiveness, or you may term it as stupidity. While others let a story go by unnoticed and forgotten I gave it due attention and it was impressed upon my mind in indelible letters. I was inquisitive, wanted to find out particulars. I had a desire which had to be satisfied, especially if stories were conflicting. Distance or miles was no object. In the case of the Solomon Lake tragedy, it was told in different ways. Knowing that the Hardanger Heroine Guri Endresen Rosseland had come back and re-established her home after the Indian outbreak, I made up my mind to see her personally, also her son-in-law, Oscar Erickson. I went there on Sunday morning. As previously mentioned there was not a single road laid out by the proper authorities. But we had the road laid out by the Government, where most convenient, between the Norway Lake and the Eagle Lake colonies. In Sec. 20 in Dovre, half ways between the colonies, there were two settlers, Lars Endresen Rosseland and his neighbor, Lars Larson. I there met the old lady, a genuine type of a good old grandmother and often wished that this country had a good supply of grandmothers like her. Accomodating, kind, pleasant, talkative and social. It was not long before she had a good lunch for me and said, "Ver so go." She took a seat at the end of the table. She was chuck full of questions and I had a pretty good supply of answers. I finally told her my errand—that I liked to have her tell me the story of the tragedy in detail as I had heard it in different ways. She put her elbow on the table, rested her head on her hand for a moment then said, "As a rule I avoid talking about it as much as possible. It is not pleasant. I would like to forget it. But as you have come so far I shall tell you the whole story in detail." And those details I shall never forget. There were tears in her eyes and pretty soon I got to a point where I wished I had not gone there. Tears were running down my boyish chin. There was something like a frog choking up my throat when she told me about their lovely little pioneer home. How the Indians swooped down upon them. How she took her little nursing baby girl and hid under the cellar trap-door, in such a way that she, unnoticed by the Indians, could see every move. Then she stepped outside, and pointed her finger. There is where my husband fell, there is where my

oldest son, Endre, fell , and over there a younger son, Ole. The two nearly grown up girls first tried to hide upstairs but came down and ran for the brush but were caught by the Indians, tied onto their ponies and carried off. It was clear in my mind, she said, that I would not see my girls any more. She told how important it was to her to keep the baby from crying or give the least sound to attract their attention. Then her turn would have come. Before Indians left one of them took his time to give the bodies a kick and roll them to see if they were dead. Ole was not dead but played dead so well that he deceived him, whereupon he gave him a hit with the butt end of his gun. From what she saw she also thot they all three were dead. When the Indians disappeared over the hill, she was grateful over the fact that the child had been so quiet. That saved the lives of both of them. She said she pressed the little baby girl to her breast and said, "God bless you little soul. Now you are all I have left in this world." That little baby girl is now the wife of Per Alvig of Solomon Lake. She now took the child and set off for the Eagle Lake settlement, how far she got or where she put up over night I do not remember. Most likely in the open as there were no settlers between Sec. 20 and Eagle Lake settlement on the eastern borders of the township. In the morning she could not resist a great longing to go back to her home, and she started for home like being led by a strong hand. She wanted to place a pillow under the heads of her dead and show them the last favor of covering them up before her final leave. When she reached her home, how happily surprised she was in the midst of agony, death and sorrow, to find that Ole had revived and wounded, bleeding and weak, walking about in the house trying to find something to eat. Her first care then was to wash and dress his wounds, to keep the flies off, and then give her attention to the dead. Leaving the baby with Ole while she made breakfast, which tasted good to both of them. Then she gathered courage to go and find their oxen, but found only one. She took one belonging to neighbor Lars Larson who had luckily escaped with family but never returned. She yoked up the oxen but they had never worked together and it is reasonable to believe were yoked up wrong. Oxen as a rule were very particular about being on the right side. She however had a great time with them. No use thinking of wagon, there being a load of hay on it. But there was a sleigh with a home made box on it made from rough lumber. She hitched the oxen to the sleigh and tied them while she gathered what she could take along of clothes and provisions to eat. She then tucked up Ole, her wounded son, in one cover in a half sitting position and the baby by his side, started off with those unruly oxen on the Eagle Lake trail. Arriving at Section 36 by the Eagle Lake creek, the place of my refuge in the storm, she found two more wounded victims to add to her moving hospital. They were Mr. Foot and her son-in-law, Oscar Erickson. Their wives had been with them, giving them what aid they could. But taking the situation seriously into consideration, they urged their wives to leave them and go to Green Lake if possible to get help or save their own lives. The women at first refused, they would stay by them, live or die. They finally came to a mutual agreement. Said good-bye to their husbands with but faint hope of ever seeing them any more. A desire ran thru the minds of their husbands during their long wait, Oh! That life would end and stop agony, pains and suffering. Just then Guri came to their aid in the above mentioned rig, oxen and sleigh and her precious cargo. She exchanged the sleigh for a wagon. Guri, the good Samaritan, then got busy washing and dressing their wounds, finding necessary change of clothes for them at the cabin. There was no time to spare. They had to be off in a hurry. She packed into the wagon anything she could make use of. She must have been a strong woman. She practically lifted up and carried the wounded men into the wagon box, tucked them carefully and comfortably to the best of her judgment and started off for Forest City, leaving Swede Charley dead, with hoe in one hand and potato in the

other, with the three wounded persons and the baby. Ole was able at short shifts to relieve his mother driving the oxen to give her a little rest, and that little rest of hers was to see to wants, nursing and care of the baby. This way in due time they reached Forest City in Meeker county.

The two daughters which she saw from her hiding place that fatal moment and never expected to see any more when carried off on Indian ponies, had inherited some of mother's Hardanger grit and heroic pluck. They tore themselves loose from their Indian savages, frightening the ponies, running into the brush where they hid on the ground while they heard and saw the Indians passing and shooting away. They did not think of going back to the house as they feared all were killed. After hiding for a long time, after seeing the Indians disappear going north, they finally started off, heading for the Eagle Lake settlement but got on another trail leading them to Nest Lake settlement to the home of T.T.Thompson and brother J.P. Thompson, and their brother-in-law, Samuel Stoner (pioneer sheriff.) Finding their homes deserted they headed for Kandiyohi Lakes where they were picked up by Piper and Ferguson and brot to safety by them to Forest City, the place of happy reunion. What joy in the middle of strife, murder, death and sorrow. The two wounded men again met their wives and Guri her daughter, Mrs. Erickson, and there stood the heroine face to face with her two daughters which she had been mourning for lost.

Long live the memory, the name and the fame of the Hardanger Heroine Guri Endresen Rosseland! A state monument marks the place where rest the dust near the Solomon Lake church.

I soon ventured on farther on pioneer trails where I got well and favorably acquainted with the Eagle Lake early pioneer families, John Bratberg, Nels Grue, Syvert Olson, Lars Arneson, Ole Thompson, Johan Nygaard, Lars Baklund, Johan Skattos, Halvor Sondreson, Gunder Gunderson and Osmund Lunde, and the five brothers, Erick Olson, Hendrick Olson, Andrias Olson, Hans Olson and Arne Olson, all pleasant, fine people. The only one now left is John Bratberg, who is well advanced in age, nearing one hundred mark. Mr. Bratberg is one of the finest men I ever met, loved and respected by all. He has now been totally blind for many years, but the venerable old man is receiving good care by his two children. G.J. Bratberg and family and daughter Bergitte, who prove to be genuine twigs from the old root.

#### PIONEER KID

(Continued)

March 10, 1926 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

HISTORICAL ESSAY BY NEW LONDON GIRL

MRS. LORETTA C. WOODCOCK'S

PIONEER LIFE IN MINNESOTA

The fears and hardships that confronted Mrs. Loretta C. Woodcock during her pioneer days in Minnesota were no greater than those of the other women that faced the uncivilized frontiers, with their husbands, at that time. But because Mrs. Woodcock was of such a young and tender age and had come directly from Alfred Center, New York, alone with her husband, as young and inexperienced as she, made the trials much harder for her.

Elijah F. Woodcock came to Minnesota in 1856 and took up a homestead on the shores of Green Lake, where the modest little village of Spicer now stands. Mr. Woodcock, Mr. V. L. Forsythe and Mr. Jesse M. Ayers selected three hundred and twenty acres at this spot for a townsite and called it "Columbia." They thought there was a glorious future in store for this Green Lake country because of its beautiful scenery and bountiful game. Mr. Woodcock hastened back to New York and the same year returned with Loretta Woodcock as his wife. She was a mere slip of a girl, a little past nineteen, of strong constitution and a sunny nature.

They traveled by rail as far as the Mississippi, then by boat to St. Paul. Here they secured an ox team and the small company of ten men and one woman set out. The men walked, but Mrs. Woodcock was placed on the top of the load. They passed over very rough ground, stumps of trees where the woods had been cut down, standing in the road. In going over one of these stumps Mrs. Woodcock was shaken from her unsteady seat and fell to the ground, both wheels of the wagon passing over her ankle. Fortunately for her, the ground was soft so she escaped a crushed or broken ankle, but it was very painful and she could not step on her foot for the remainder of the journey. They traveled by day and slept under the open sky at night. On the fifth day they came in sight of their destination, Green Lake. Mrs. Woodcock felt she could never be lonely on this beautiful shore but she was soon to change her mind.

There were two half finished cabins here in which the small band spent their first night. The next day the rest of the party decided not to locate at this place, so they helped finish the Ayers cabin and made it as comfortable as possible for the young couple. They put a roof on it, a door and a floor. They made a table out of dry goods boxes and nailed a small chest to the wall for a cupboard. The bedstead was made by boring holes in the logs, side poles put into them and a cord laced across. All winter her rocking chair was a trunk and her husband's chair a three-legged stool. That day Indian warriors came to the cabin. They peered into the windows at Mrs. Woodcock and talked excitedly among themselves about the "white squaw" but went away without doing any harm.

After the other men had seen them settled comfortably, they started on further into the wilderness. The two Kouts brothers stayed in their cabin until in the spring when the provisions ran so low they were forced to start out for the nearest settlement on snowshoes.

The first winter Mrs. Woodcock spent in Minnesota is said to have been the hardest winter witnessed here in many years. The snow came early and lasted long and was four feet on the level. The game disappeared and there was not much of a variety in their bill of fare; they had a little pork; beans, lard, and molasses, but before the winter was over these were exhausted and they had only tea and flour upon which they lived alone for weeks. At last the flour was exhausted and they faced starvation. One of

the men that was staying with them started out on foot to the nearest family, who were forty miles distant, to borrow flour and returned with thirty pounds.

Mrs. Woodcock's greatest trial was her fear of the Indians. While her husband would take the dog and go out to try to kill a bird to vary their bill of fare, she would crouch behind the stove, holding her cat, her only companion, and not move until he returned.

When the ice melted, the wild geese and ducks came in plenty but they had nothing but water and salt to cook with them.

Mrs. Woodcock became ill and continued to grow worse until her husband felt he must go out to get help. He left one morning for Diamond Lake, where he knew that a man lived. He was gone five hours and two hours before he returned her baby was born. The terrible suspense she went through must have been an ordeal in itself, while she lay there fearing the Indians every moment, but none came at that time. She began to think it was rather a sober romance but the following day a team which they had expected, from Henderson, brot some timely comfort to her.

When the baby was fourteen days old, Mr. V.L. Forsythe and his wife and Mr. J. W. Burdick came to their settlement. Mrs. Forsythe was the first white woman Mrs. Woodcock had seen for seven months. She was a young, inexperienced wife like herself but Mr. Burdick was a great help to her in caring for the baby as he had two children of his own. The new settlers lived with the Woodcocks most of the summer in their one room cabin until they built their own home.

The Indians often walked, unceremoniously, into the cabin, and after looking the baby over attentively and talking about it, would depart, taking what they wished of the bread or other eatables they happened to find. Often the Indians would come in bands, with a very war-like appearance, but after helping themselves to the pioneers' provisions, would depart without any further harm.

The next year went better as the young couple had profited by their sad experience of the first year and had provided enough food and fuel for the winter. They also had a cow and some chickens brought from the settlement. But their clothes were worn out and they dressed much like the Indians.

The next fall another child was born to them. She was a marked contrast to the first one, a beautiful child, strong and healthy, where the first babe was small and ailing.

The next spring the Forsythes decided to go back east and the Woodcocks dreaded the separation, so they decided to go with them. They sold their cow to raise money and rented their farm for three years to a neighbor. They hired an ox team and together the two families set out for their old home and civilization. By leaving at this time they escaped the Indian outbreak in 1862.

When they left Minnesota they fully expected to return at the end of three years but the outbreak so devastated the country they had no desire to return. The Indians waged a war where neither age nor sex was considered and within a few days the labor, which had caused so many trials, so much heartache, and so much fear, had been swept away. Where their cabins had stood, remained only ashes to tell the

story of the sad romance, longings, prayers, and tears that were here spent for the spreading of civilization.

When one views our beautiful Green Lake as it rests so peacefully, on a summer's evening, one can not imagine the painful experiences that have happened on its shores. Neither can one place it in a wilderness with wild game and Indians roving in its woods where now a chain of cottages lines its banks.

Bessie A. Andrews

New London High School

New London, Minnesota

(Submitted in contest sponsored by State Federation of Woman's Clubs and State Historical Society.)

[Recorded here only because it appeared in the same column in the Willmar Tribune where Gabriel Stene's OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES normally appeared and he had no story printed that week.]

## 28

March 17, 1926 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

THE IVERSON FAMILY

No. 28

The Indians were seen heading north after the bloody tragedy at Lars Endresen's home on Sec. 20, Town of Dovre, aiming for the home of Johannes Iverson, on the south edge of a grove at Crook Lake. They found Iverson cutting grass with a scythe, a little west of the present house of Frank Eklof in Section 32, Town of Lake Andrew. They killed Iverson and used the same tactics as they did with the Endresen girls. They captured his daughter Mary, 16, put her on a pony, after which an Indian jumped up on the horse, grabbed the girl in his arms to carry her away. But she played her part well. Screaming, kicking, scratching, biting and landing her double fists in the Indian's face she frightened the pony to such an extent that the Indian finally had to jump from the pony, attempting to pull the girl off the horse with him. But she gave the pony a kick, started him into the brush where she managed to get off and hide in the thick brush. The Indians got busy looking for the horse and lost the girl. The brush being very thick the family in their fright were divided into three bunches. Mary took flight for life around the east of Crook Lake over what is now the Mrs. O.B. Railson's place, and striking the Burbank-Paynesville trail was picked up and reached Burbank that same evening and went on to St. Cloud without knowing the fate of the rest. The mother took the same direction east of the lake with the baby on one arm and leading another child, making for Thomas Osmundson's place where they used to visit. The grass on the prairie being heavy and tall, the child she was leading became tired out, so she carried both of the children most of the way while getting to Osmundson's, over three miles. She was taken over to the Island where



other families had gathered. There she spent the night and all she knew about the rest was that her husband was cold in death. John, Lena and Bennie took another direction around west end of Crook Lake and then over the wild prairie to Sven Borgen's place where they were accustomed to visit. Finding the place deserted and being late they lifted the cellar trap door and went down into the cellar covered the door and spent the night there. In the morning they were horrified to hear someone walking on the floor over them. They feared that it was the Indians, but were happily surprised to hear the voice of Sven Borgen and his son Gunder Swenson, who went there to get a load of household goods and provisions. Then they heard the good news about their mother and two smallest children. They were also brought over to the Island where they met the other members of the family. But where was Mary? The refugees for east of Paynesville to St. Cloud where they again stood face to face with Mary. Mary was adopted by an American childless family of St. Cloud and never returned to Norway Lake. After the scramble and fear was over Mrs. Iverson with other settlers returned with the rest of the children and married Ole Dahl, a homesteader on what is now the O.B. Railson place. John never made his home there any more. When the school in Dist. 25 was organized with the little log house built, the Iverson children, being in the district, were enrolled in the enrollment with the rest of us.

Ben Iverson, Oscar Erickson, Carl Syverson, Ole E. Reese and myself were classmates for two or three terms. Ole Dahl, however, deserted the family, left for Big Stone Lake and from there to Oregon. John Iverson became well known and respected farmer at Diamond Lake, with whom his mother spent the remaining days. Not long ago John, on his return from New London one day, noticed some fine grapes by the road side. He stopped his wagon to get a handful of them, was then stricken with heart failure or apoplexy and dropped dead by the wayside. His children and wife are living on the place. Lena Iverson was married and has passed on long ago. Bennie Iverson has been farming near Chippewa Falls, Pope county, the most of the time, but is now a retired farmer living with his family in Brooten. Peter Iverson, the baby the mother carried on her arm, and the one she was leading and their brother Regue Dahl, I have lost track of. Amy, a daughter of Ben Iverson, married a nephew of Rev. H.E. Baalson, Silas Swenson of Brooten, the son of Baalson's sister. The one previously mentioned, as a baby girl who was born in a covered wagon by the roadside on the pioneer trail near St. Paul, then a shanty town in 1865. In that established household there is now another baby girl, Betty Lou, the granddaughter. Rev. Baalson has also another nephew, Lieut. Carl B. Eielson, who is said to be an expert on the bird route, and is scheduled for a flight to the North Pole, the latter part of this month of March.

In the pioneer period there was some speculations about Lars Nelson not attending school, he being yet in his teens. Rumors were afloat that he had contracted a habit of frequently visiting at the home of Ole Knutson in Arctander, the result was that there was a Miss Iess in Arctander, and a Mrs. More in Lake Andrew. It was even rumored that he had a spring seat on his wagon, something out of sight in those days.

I have been trying for many years to locate the very spot where Johannes Iverson from Hurdal, Norway fell and was buried, but have failed so far. Understand that there is a stone marker on hand given by the Old Settlers' association for that purpose of marking the place as soon as the spot can be located, to show where lies the dust of the remains of one of the early pioneers and victims of the Indian massacre of 1862, in Section 32, Lake Andrew, on the south edge of Crook Lake Grove, near Frank Eklof's house.

PIONEER KID

(Continued)

## 29

March 24, 1926 Willmar Tribune

OLD NORWAY LAKE REMINISCENCES

EARLY WILLMAR

No.29

My first recollections of Willmar are from the time when there was nothing south of the railroad track but railroad builders' equipment. Again I remember Willmar when there was only one row of business houses on what was known as "Front Street" but the correct name of which is Pacific Avenue, and a few houses beyond, muskrat homes included in the background. In those early days farmers living near the station would go to town and pick up odd jobs for a little pin-money. Ole N. Elgeross told me how he was to put up a fence at the edge of a slough located just in front of where the Willmar postoffice now stands, on the site of the proposed new hotel. He sharpened the fence posts and drove them in with an axe. The axe flew off the handle and into a water puddle, got lost in the mud and was never found. So Ole has some claim on property on that corner to this day.

Frank Strecker stood in the door of the Pacific Hotel and shot muskrats on Pacific avenue in a slough located where the fine railroad park is now located.

Nels Hoglund spoke up at the same time and said he had never used a gun for that purpose but caught muskrats in traps just in front of I.C. Olson's old furniture store (now Berkness, Lundberg & Co.) That slough lay where Jim Maloney's popular resort is now located.

One time, while stopping overnight in Willmar on account of a snowstorm, I wanted some blacksmith work done. I went to the shop of Christopher Bonde, where the Bonde Block is now located. A kid in knee pants was ordered to clear off the snow from in front of the shop, for snow was falling and drifting to "beat the band." The kid's name was Peter Bonde.

Allow me to tell in part about the worst snow winter I ever experienced back in the early seventies and give names and places in detail. Snow was from 2 to 3 feet on the level and snow drifts from 5 to 7 feet deep. The winters of 1881 and 1887 came closest to it. Wind and snow were two good companions, being on the job night and day. What they could not fill up going one way they completed going back, snow running all the time like a huge stream of water. No barns in the country those days. Stables, hay stacks, wood piles and at many places even the houses were snowed under. Many had a great time to locate their wells which usually were simply a frame and a lid over it, some pulling out the water by a stick so devised for a pail. Others used a rope with a sinking weight on it. There apparently was more water in the ground at that time than now. From twelve to twenty foot canals had to be dug in snow

every day between houses. No country stores then. Did not have either groceries or nail for three weeks. The situation became desperate. Those being used to filling in between their chewing apparatus, began to eat their pockets or anything tasting tobacco. Women threatened to strike if attention was not given to the kitchen department. The most serious matter was if matches run out. That would mean freezing to death. Kerosene lamps, not being much in use, were considered as explosive stuff. Home made tallow candles were all the go. When they ran out, they filled a saucer with lard, made a wick out of rags, soaked it in the lard and lit one end extending over the edge. This gave a light sufficient to avoid collision in the room. Wading in snow and borrowing between neighbors might do for a while but not last. In the long run something had to be done. I knew Sven Borgen had a pair of fine skiis made out of ash. I had previously tried them. Playing mole and pocket gopher in the deepest snow drifts was fine sport. I conceived the idea of borrowing those skiis and organizing a road gang to open up the road to Willmar. But that half mile walk to go there and get them was the toughest walk I ever had. The Swensons approved of the idea. I got the skiis. Gunder Swenson; otherwise so accommodating and ready at any emergency hesitated to go himself, but rigged out a good man with a good team and necessary outfit sufficient for a trip to the North Pole. Thinking the matter over I did not wonder so much as he had just taken to himself a young wife of 17.

Next move was to Hedin's at A.H. Gordhamer's place. Albert Hedin said he had a pair of high fliers who hardly would touch the ground enough to make a mark. But he would come out and try. Next I went to Pioneer H. W. Mankel. Pointing at Oscar, about 4, and said, "That's my only help. Am alone with chores." But the girls, Jennie, (now Mrs. A. H. Gordhamer,) and sister, Mary, urged upon him to go and said, "Don't worry for chores." So he enlisted. Next move was to Johannes Norman's. He had what we called loway flyers, a team purchased by Reir Thorson and who sold them to Peter Odell who again traded them to Norman for his oxen. Norman said, "They are too high lifted and will not follow the ground." I said, Never mind. They will be glad to follow the ground by the time we get to Willmar. So he was on the job. The next move was to Nels Bratland's an oldish man. Did not insist on him going, as he had all the chores to do. But the women folks did not give up. His wife and three daughters—the oldest Caroline, later the well known, Mrs. C.C. Selvig, Sophia, the next oldest, later Mrs. Sophia L. Rice; Johanna, 15, the youngest, did not give a snap for anything else but the mail, so Mr. Brattland was to come along. The next man was Nicolas Blom, living in a little log cabin on the naked hill where now stands the fine home of Oscar Larson. Blom said, "I have no team of any kind, but I have a good shovel, good arms and a good will." I said, That is satisfactory. The next was Peter Warholm, also living in a log cabin on the naked prairie, which now is the finely equipped home of John Nelson. Lars Hedin was up against it. His team was adorned with horns. He could not mix. But would send a good man, which he did, a Mr. Skoglund. Ole E. Reese came there to borrow matches. Mrs. Hedin said, "Our supply is low but we must divide." Ole volunteered to take a shovel and go with us. J. Axel Hedin and Peter A. Odell were also drawn, bringing with them John Bergen, and extra shoveler. This completed the gang that was to meet next morning at the Ole Dahl's home, now the home of Mrs. O.B. Railson.

The next morning we were on the job, nine men and teams and four extra shovelers. We at times unhitched, drove the team thru and returned for the sleigh. One team could not stand it at the lead very long, so we had to change off. We selected the lake roads and fought through until we got to the

summit, half-way between Lake Florida slough and Long Lake when we came to a halt. It was now clear to our minds, that we could not make Willmar and return the same day. Hard enough if we could make one way. After some discussion the majority wanted to return and give it up as being too hard on horses. I said, It is a shame to be hard on the horses, but a bigger shame to give it up after we got such a good start. I shall insist on proceeding. Peter Odell, J. Axel Hedin and Peter Warholm, said "Same here." Gunder Swenson's hired man refused on the grounds he had no authority to stay away. Albert Hedin's and Norman's teams were all in, completely worthless. Mankell had a lame horse. Bratlund was excused for old age. Before leaving us they chipped in for lodging expenses. Now we were four men and tams and four extra shovelers to proceed. When we got to Erick Bergerson's on Long Lake, We sprung a draft on him. But he only gave us a good laugh and the same situation as Gunder Swenson. He had just taken to himself a young wife in her teens, which he picked up at the cozy home of Pioneer Syvert Olson at Eagle Lake. I said, You will be excused but let us see what your young wife is good for. We have some crumbs of bread in our pockets but they are frozen as hard as rocks. Would like some warm coffee. She was soon at work and asked how many we were. I said, Eight. And she proved herself equal to her job. We did not only get good coffee but a good dinner after which we proceeded across the chain of lakes, reaching Willmar a little before sunset. Along on Pacific avenue I was at the lead and got lodged in the slough pit in front of Pacific House, which was easily done as our horses were all in. Senator Rice then approached us swinging his cap and shouted, "Hold on boys, take it easy. You have been doing well, we will do the rest." Shovels were ordered from Costello's hardware on Pacific avenue and A. N. Lewis', and a good man at the end of each shovel under the supervision of A.E.Rice. We were soon piloted to Dunn's livery barn, where we found plenty of room, but no hay. They said, "There is no hay in town." A.B.Robbins one of the best men who ever walked the streets of Willmar (believe he was station agent at the time) spoke up and said, "There is some hay upstairs in my barn. You are welcome to it." I asked, where is that barn? He said, "It's way out on the outskirts of the town. The very last house to the right going south on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. It later became the A.E. Rice property, and was purchased from Robbins, Hay began moving by the armful. A young tailor, Louis Rodlun, was at the head. He had his shop on corner where Lundquist hardware is now. We were treated fine, President Grant with his cabinet could not have been treated any better, free lodging and free meals.

The merchants were glad to see the farmers, and the farmers were glad to see the merchants. It was proven that one could not very well get along without the other. We did the shopping in the evening and in the morning got all the mail for three weeks. Snow had been drifting all night and returning was just as bad as going, if not worse. We met three teams on Foot Lake—Syvert Olson, Nils Grue and Mr. Anderson. This was a lift to us. We reached Erick Bergerson's for another good dinner. Leaving there we met four teams—Ole Johnson, Lars Nelson, Hans A. Halvorson and Andreas Pikhagen, who were also on the good road job. We reached home a little before sunset where we had grand opening and delivery of groceries and mail. This was one of the old style pioneer trips to Willmar which took us two days and hard labor. We did not press the button running over the same distance 16 miles in about 45 minutes like we do now. It was in one of those days that Knut, the oldest son of Mads Knutson, pioneer settler east of Willmar, lost his life with the snow plow gang opening road from Willmar westward. Believe the traffic west of Willmar was abandoned about three weeks, trains running only between St. Paul and Willmar.

PIONEER KID.

(Continued)