

## **Knudson, Ole and Aase, Charter Members of the East Norway Lake Lutheran Church**

Ole was born<sup>1</sup> in Sigdal, Norway on March 1, 1835, the first child of Knut Olsen and Ragnhild Bjørnsdatter. They lived on the Rustand farm but moved shortly after Ole's birth to the Storebråten farm, also in Sigdal. Ole's full Norwegian name was therefore Ole Knudson Storebråten.

As the oldest son, Ole had the first option to eventually buy the Storebråten farm. However<sup>2</sup>, at 18 years of age, he chose to leave the farm and emigrate to America. He boarded the sail ship *Sjofna* in Drammen on May 17, 1853 and landed in Quebec 11 weeks and 3 days later.

From Quebec Ole made his way to *Rock Prairie* a Norwegian settlement just west of Beloit, WI. There he worked on logging and other jobs. Moving westward, Ole caught up with a family that had emigrated in 1850 from a neighboring farm in Sigdal. This family included a daughter named Aase, born October 7, 1836 at Hovlandsmoen, Sigdal. Her parents were Narve Knudsen and Gunnild Christensdatter.

Ole and Aase were married<sup>3</sup> in the Lutheran Church in Wiota, WI on Nov. 11, 1857. Their son Knud was born the following summer and was baptized in the Wiota Church. Their second son Anders was born Sept. 16, 1859. There is a record<sup>4</sup> that Ole and Aase took communion in the Wiota Church on Oct. 2, 1859 and on March 14, 1860, indicating that they still resided in Wisconsin at that time.

In 1860, Ole, Aase and the two boys moved to the Norway Lake Settlement in Minnesota. The Kandiyohi County History of 1905 lists Ole under the heading of "pre-emptors or squatters," one of the three to settle in 1860.

Their one year old son Anders died on Dec. 3, 1860, and he is probably the first to be buried in the little cemetery near the original Old Log Church. A daughter, Gunnil (or Nilje) was born on August 27, 1861. She has the distinction of being the first white child born in this township. Ole and Aase built a log house, probably in 1861.

Starting on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August of 1862 the Indians of this area rose up against the settlers. Scores of settlers were killed in central Minnesota, including several in the Norway Lake area. Ole was involved in the action over the next several days. As a consequence of the Indian raids, Ole and family moved to Rice County, Minnesota where they lived for four years<sup>5</sup>. Their second daughter, Ragna, was born there on Dec. 27, 1864. Ole and his family returned from exile in 1866. Their third daughter, Anna Marie, was born in Nov. 1868.

A land certificate<sup>6</sup> shows that on Jan. 3, 1865 Ole bought the north half of the NE quarter of Section 10. Four other documents showing later purchases, three from the government and one from the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad. There is a plat map showing that, by 1886, Ole had title to 390 acres.

In 1866, immigrants began to flood in, among them two of Ole's sisters. The Old Log Church was built in 1868 on land donated by Ole Knudson. He was also on the building committee.

Ole and Aase suffered a grave loss on Jan. 12, 1875 when their 16 year old son Knud died. This must have been a crushing blow for Ole, then nearly 40 years, but the good Lord compensated by granting them another son, Knud Albert, born on Sept. 29, 1881 when Aase was nearly 45 years old.

Ole was active in community life, serving Arctander township as supervisor and chairman. He served a term as clerk of a school that was built in 1872 on another corner of his property. He was instrumental in founding the First Lutheran Church of Norway Lake, and served as its secretary. He was also active in politics as a Republican.

During these years Ole and Aase expanded and improved their houses. There is a grand picture, taken in late 1897 or early 1898, of the house with most of his descendants and relatives standing in front. Aase was not in the picture as she had died on Aug. 16, 1896.

Ole got his citizenship papers on May 3, 1898. About that time, he made a visit to his birthplace in Sigdal, Norway. He probably took the grand picture with him. When he returned to America, his niece Martha was with him, the two leaving Norway on Sept. 19, 1898. Martha's father, mother and brother followed a year later.

Ole Knudson continued to live in the same house until his death on Sep. 30, 1919. Ole and Aase are buried at the First Lutheran Church of Norway Lake.

Report prepared by Earl O. Knutson, April, 2017.

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1 Ole and Aase's birthplace, date, and parentage were verified at <https://media.digitalarkivet.no/en/view/8511/41981/1>.

2 Many details of Ole's travels and life are found in an interview recorded in the journal *Sigdalslag 1914*. Available in English from [Sigdalslag.org](http://Sigdalslag.org).

3 The marriage and birth of the first son are recorded in *Ministerialbog for Wiota Menighed...4de November 1855 – 31te December 1918* viewed at the West Wiota Lutheran Church, Wiota, WI.

4 Recorded in Pastor Detrickson's log book, microfilm roll 14 viewed at the American Lutheran Church archives, upper floor of the Wisconsin State Historical Society building in Madison WI.

5 Ole, Aase and 3 children (with novel spellings) appear in Household 140 in the 1865 census for Wheeling, Rice County, MN

6 Found among family heirlooms (land and citizenship certificates, photographs),