

HANS SEM PETERSON AND ANNA JOHANNESDATTER TOTLAND, charter members of West Norway Lake Lutheran Church

Hans Sem Peterson was born October 11, 1838 to Petter Nielsen Grindheim and Wilhelmine Catharine Metzel Sem on the Grindheim farm, Finnås/Moster Parish, Hordaland, Norway. Hans had one older brother, Nels and three younger brothers and a sister who died in infancy. Nels, Peter and Sophius Christian would all follow him to America. His youngest brother, Andreas, died at age seven. Hans was the first to leave Norway on March 29, 1856 on a voyage which lasted ten weeks and three days. He was only seventeen years old. Eventually he arrived in Beloit, Wisconsin where he worked for area farmers until his brother Nels arrived in 1857. Hans and Nels continued to work on area farms and do other odd jobs until 1859 when they headed to the frontier in Monongalia County arriving at the new Norway Lake settlement in October. They traveled by covered wagon and a team of oxen along with the Johannes Iverson family who settled south of Crook Lake in Lake Andrew Township and the Thomas Osmundson family who settled on the south shore of Norway Lake. Nels homesteaded on the north end of the lake in Colfax Township and Hans took a homestead about a mile northwest in what is today Section 24 of Norway Lake Township.

In the summer of 1862, Hans went to work for New London pioneer and founder Louis Larson who had just purchased a horse-powered threshing machine. They had just set up the rig near Monticello when word arrived of the Indian uprising and the killing of thirteen people at the West Lake Settlement just west of Norway Lake. Hans rushed to Paynesville where he met Even Glesne and others from Norway Lake. Hans and a group of men formed a burial party and returned to Norway Lake. Among those they buried was Johannes Iverson, the man who had traveled to the area with Hans and Nels. Hans, along with brothers Nels, Peter and Christian enlisted in the army and were assigned to Company "D" of the First Minnesota Mounted Rangers under General Henry Sibley which pursued the Dakota Indians into Dakota Territory. Hans was mustered out of the Rangers in November 1863.

Following the Dakota Uprising, Hans experienced a longing to return to his homeland and see his parents so in the spring of 1864, he returned to Norway. On April 16, 1866, Hans married Anna Johannesdatter Totland, a housemaid in the Grindheim home who already had relatives at Norway Lake. Anna was born in Moster, Finnås Parish, Hordaland on October 21, 1839 to Johannes Johanneson and Anna Larsdatter Totland. On April 26, 1867, Hans, Anna and their baby daughter Petrina left Norway to return to Norway Lake. Traveling with them were forty other people from Moster many of whom settled in Colfax Township.

Hans and Anna had thirteen children.

1. The oldest was Petrina Wilhelmina (1866-1958) married to Lars Bergelin and is buried at West Norway Lake;
2. Johanna Louise (1867-1935) married to Anders Walen buried at Glenfield, ND;
3. Christiana Christine (1869-1929) married Lewis Anderson buried at Silverton, Oregon;
4. Peter Andreas (1871-1936) buried at West Norway Lake;
5. Antonette Marthea (1872-1970) married to Oliver Danielson buried at Kamsack, Saskatchewan;
6. Wilhelmine Chatrine (1873-1946) married to Anton Berg buried at Bremerton, Washington;
7. Dorthea Sophie (1875-1878) buried at West Norway Lake;
8. Hansine Serine (1877-1918) married to Christian Nelson buried at Crow River Lutheran;
9. Anna Gurine (1877-1877) buried at West Norway Lake;
10. Christian H. Theodore (1879-1956) married Bertha Mikkelson buried at West Norway Lake;
11. Dorthea Louise (1881-1881) buried at West Norway Lake;
12. Louise H (1882-1932);
13. Carl H (1882-1964) married Annette Madson buried at West Norway Lake.

Anna Peterson died on June 16, 1895 and Hans Peterson died on August 25, 1933. They are buried at West Norway Lake Lutheran Cemetery where Hans was a charter member.

Prepared by Marlin Henjum

Sources Consulted

U. S. Census

Minnesota Territorial and State Censuses, 1849-1905

U.S. Evangelical Lutheran Church of America Records, 1875-1940

Minnesota Death Index, 1908-2002

Ancestry.com

"Peterson Roots," compiled by Nella (Peterson) Swenson

"Peterson Family History," compiled by Peter Gandrud

"A Guide to Graves in Kandiyohi Cemeteries," Kandiyohi County Historical Society, 1981

Web: Minnesota, Find A Grave Index 1800-2012

Norway, Select Baptisms, 1634-1927