

ANDREW REIULFSEN GLESNE RAILSON AND BERTHA MARIE SKALERUD, Charter members of East Norway Lake Lutheran Church

Andrew Railson was born on the Glesne Øvre farm, Krodsherred Parish, Buskerud, Norway on August 16, 1833, the son of Reiulf Evensen Glesne (1803-1855) and Kristi Andersdatter Glesne (1804-1834). Andrew's mother died when he was only five weeks old and he was entrusted to his grandparents care until he was eleven when he was given over to the care of an uncle.

When he was only seventeen years old, he decided to go to America with his brother Even. They sailed from Drammen on May 22, 1850 and arrived in New York on July 31. They traveled to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and headed for Green County. Like most young immigrants, he worked on farms and in the pine forests near Eau Claire and Menominee. His obituary reports that he returned to Norway in 1855 which may have been to see his ailing father who died in November.

Andrew returned to America and settled in Stillwater, Minnesota where he worked in the saw mills for three years. In June of 1858 he walked from Stillwater to Forest City in Meeker County where he met up with his brother Even who had already made his initial trip to the Norway Lake area. The two brothers returned to Even's claim on Norway Lake and spent the next couple of days floating around the lake on a make-shift raft. Dependent on the wind they had adequate time to name this large body of water "Norway Lake."

Eventually they reached the southeast corner of the lake where Andrew chose his homestead. After filing their claims and building their cabins, the Railson brothers walked to St. Paul. Even continued on to his wife in Green County, Wisconsin while Andrew purchased some supplies and returned to his cabin where he lived all alone for three weeks before any new neighbors showed up. Andrew then returned to Stillwater and was married to Berthe Marie Johannesdatter Skaalrud on October 5, 1860.

Berthe Marie was the daughter of Johannes Johanneson Skaalrud and Anna Larson Skaalrud of Viker Parish, Søndre Land, Norway and was born on December 21, 1833. Andrew then took his new bride to their homestead at Norway Lake where they spent two years before being forced to leave due to the Dakota War.

They spent the next three years in Kenyon and St. Cloud, Minnesota before returning to Norway Lake in 1865. They returned with a new daughter,

- Caroline (1863-1900)

and a soon to be born son,

- Robert Martin (1865-1902).

Over the coming years, they would add five more children to the family:

- Johan 1867-1875,
- Bertha Marie (Mrs. O. A. Hedin) 1869-1936,
- Edwin Charles 1870-1934,
- Anna Elizabeth (Mrs. C. E. Monson) 1872-1947, and
- Ida (Mrs. K. H. Hande) 1875-1939.

Berthe Marie Railson died on April 13, 1911. Following a long illness which left him bedridden, Andrew died at his Norway Lake farm on November 2, 1915. The Railsons are buried at First Lutheran Church of Norway Lake.

In addition to playing a prominent role in the establishment of the Norway Lake church, Andrew was a prominent political official at the school, township, county and state level. In the early years, he was instrumental in lobbying the U. S. Congress to establish a post office at Norway Lake which was initially in his home. He served as commissioner on both the Monongalia and Kandiyohi County Boards. In 1870 he was the U. S. Census enumerator in Norway Lake Township traveling by horse and even by boat to reach the homes of the pioneer residents with whom he often spent the night. He served in both houses of the State Legislature, county treasurer, mayor of Willmar and federal land agent in the Redwood Falls Office.

As reported by the Willmar Tribune, Andrew was "one of the best known citizens of Kandiyohi County in the state at large" and the accompanying plaudits in his obituary seem to bear it out.

Prepared by Marlin Henjum

Sources Consulted:

U. S. Federal Census

Minnesota Territorial and State Censuses, 1849-1905

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

U. S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current

Keeping the Faith...Sharing the Faith, First Lutheran Church 1862-1992.

"Sturdy Pioneer and Prominent Citizen Passes," *Willmar Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1915, p. 1.

www.norwayparishes.com

Boka om Land, IV. Arvid Sandaker, Translated by Sandra Hendrickson