

EVEN REIULFSEN GLESNE RAILSON AND INGA MATHEA, Charter Members of East Norway Lake Lutheran Church

Even Railson was born on the Glesne Øvre Farm, Krodsherred Parish, Buskerud, Norway on December 27, 1830 to Reiulf Evensen Glesne (1803-1855) and Kristi Andersdatter Glesne (1804-1834). He was baptized on January 16, 1831. Even had an older sister Marie Reiulfsdatter born in 1828 and a younger brother, Anders, born in 1833. Their mother died in 1834 when Even was only four years old.

At age 19, Even and his brother Andrew sailed from Drammen on May 22, 1850 for America. They arrived in New York on August 16 and headed for Milwaukee, Wisconsin settling in Green County.

On January 26, 1856 Even married Inga Matthea Fryslie (1831-1889) in Wisconsin. Inger Matthea Fryslie was born March 31, 1831 in Land, Buskerud, Norway to Ola Erickson Fryslie (1790-1855) and Ingeborg Amundsdatter (1790-1878).

Having read in *Emigrants* of fertile lands in central Minnesota, in 1858 Even and three companions set out to explore the region. They arrived in Meeker County but decided to head further west. Eventually they arrived on the south shore of what is today West Norway Lake. Legend has it that Even won a foot race with his companions earning the right to settle on this site. Even then returned to Meeker County where he met his brother Andrew. They returned to the Norway Lake area where Andrew selected a homestead on the southeast side of the lake. It was on this trip that Even and Andrew, while floating on a log back and forth across the windswept lake, decided to name the lake after their homeland—Norway Lake.

At some point in 1859, Even returned to his wife in Wiota, Wisconsin where she gave birth to their first child Caroline on November 7, 1859.

In 1860 the family returned to Norway Lake where Even continued his fundamental role in establishing the settlement. After a harrowing experience escaping the attacking Dakota warriors by taking refuge on an island in Norway Lake, the Railson family abandoned the area and returned to Wisconsin. Once the area in Minnesota had been declared safe for settlers they returned in 1865.

Even Railson was considered by his neighbors as a man of stature in the community. He was, for example, the first farmer in the settlement to own a team of horses and was likely considered a “modern” farmer by the standards of the day. He made at least two and possibly three return trips to Norway. He played a prominent role in the establishment of the log church, East Norway Lake and First Lutheran donating the land where First Lutheran and its former parsonage stand today. In fact, the minutes of the log church dated November 19, 1869 indicate that the pastor would provide the bread for communion and that Even Railson would provide the wine. Each member would pay five cents for communion which would go to the pastor.

Even and Inga Railson had six children:

- Caroline E. (Mrs. H. J. Strand) 1859-1923,
- Edward E. 1862-1933,
- Inger Maria 1864-1916,
- Oluf Bernhard 1867-1915,
- Mina Elisa (Mrs. C. Newberger) 1870-1940 , and
- Elmer Magnus 1873-1943.

Inga Matthea died on October 25, 1889 at age 58. In his last years, Even suffered from kidney disease. In an effort to relieve his suffering, in July, 1906, he decided to return to Norway to consult a doctor. The doctor in Christiana told him there was nothing he could do to relieve his condition and instructed him to return to America at once. Even Railson died on September 6, 1906, three weeks after his return. Even and Inga Matthea Railson are buried in the First Lutheran Cemetery.

Prepared by Marlin Henjum

Sources Consulted:

US Federal Census

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

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

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“Old Settlers Gone to Great Reunion,” *Willmar Tribune*, September 12, 1906, p. 1.

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