

Jacob E. and Geoline Ramstad¹, Charter members of West Norway Lake Lutheran Church

What follows is an article written in 1932 by Emma Ramstad, daughter of Jacob and Geoline. I agree with great-grandson Gordon Hauge that it would be impossible to improve on this writing. Fortuitously, it is of just the right length for the present purpose. The last paragraph of this 1932 writing, referring to "...modern days, when everything goes so fast..." now seems quaint but is certainly more true for present-day readers. Earl Knutson.

Jacob Engebretsen Ramstad was born on the Ramstad farm in Sigdal, Norway, on March 1, 1843. His parents were Engebret Gundersen (Lier) and Gunhild Ramstad. His mother died when he was a few months old, and his father later remarried.

In 1852 he emigrated to America with his parents, his brother Gunder and sister Martha. It took over six weeks to cross the Atlantic. They came to a Norwegian settlement in Rock County, Wisconsin, where they lived for two years. In 1854 they moved to Clay County, Iowa, where the parents lived until their deaths. They endured many many hard trials and adversities in the new settlements. There was little schooling. As soon as the children were big enough they had to help clear and build. Jacob was confirmed by Rev. V. Koren, one of the first pioneer ministers in Iowa.

[Paragraph omitted².]

In 1866 Ramstad went to Norway Lake, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota, where an uncle, Gunder Gundersen, had land. He worked for the settlers in the summer and cut logs in the winter. He bought his uncle's farm and later bought more adjacent land. He helped build the first log church at Norway Lake. When West Norway Lake Church was built, he was one of the trustees for several years.

On December 25, 1871, he married Geoline Sørensen Karlsrud from Lake Johanna, Pope County, Minnesota. Mrs. Ramstad was born in Winnebago County, Wisconsin, on April 1, 1854. Her parents were Søren Karlsrud and Bergitte Sandsvik, both from Tinn, Telemark. Her father died when she was a little over one year old. A few years later her mother married Knudt Vaa, also from Telemark. They moved to Pope County, Minnesota, in 1869. They traveled with Cloud, which in those days were small towns. Mrs. Ramstad, who was the oldest of the children, helped to drive the animals, so she walked most of the way. She was 15 years old at the time. When she was 16 years old, she taught school in the old log church at Norway Lake.

Mr. and Mrs. Ramstad went through difficult circumstances and hard trials. In 1876 and 1877 grasshoppers destroyed all the crops, both grain and hay. They had to go many miles to get a little fodder for their animals. The closest town was St. Cloud, about 60 or 65 miles away. They were both industrious and thrifty, and they prospered. Jacob Ramstad died July 22, 1926 and Mrs. Ramstad on December 31, 1929. Blessed be their memory.

Their marriage was blessed by ten children, one son and nine daughters. Many of the daughters were teachers.

- Their son Edward and daughters Maria, Johanna and Selma live on the old Ramstad homestead near Sunburg, Minnesota;
- Emma in Albany, Minnesota;
- Gunhild (Mrs. H. Hauge) on a farm near Sunberg, Minnesota;
- Julia (Mrs. Alfred Soland) in Hazen, North Dakota;
- Mathilda (Mrs. Charles Carpenter) near Placerville, California;
- Edna (Mrs. Gust Bengtson) near Kerkhoven, Minnesota;
- Ruth (Mrs. Elmer Ostby) near Murdock, Minnesota.

We younger, who live in modern days, when everything goes so fast, should stop in our rush and look back to the pioneer days when our pioneer parents economized and suffered hard toils to clear and build so that the younger generation could enjoy better times. Let us not forget to honor the old pioneers. Blessed be their memories.

Emma Ramstad

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- 1 Gordon Hauge, a great-grandson, has a handwritten copy of this article, probably the original, in English. It appeared in Norwegian in the booklet *Sigdalslaget 1932*, compiled and edited by Martin T. Braateli. The words copied here are a re-translation into English by Rosella Goettelman, published in the collection *The Sigdalslag 1929 1932 1941*. This book is available from www.sigdalslag.org.
 - 2 At this point, the original text included the following paragraph, which is a side information for our purposes: "Gunder enlisted in the Civil War. He fell at the siege of Vicksburg. His sister married Knudt Stjerness, a veteran of the Civil War. They lived near St. Olaf, Iowa. They had one son and four daughters. Their son Knudt lives in St Olaf."