

Reier Thorson Sollien¹ and Kjersti Knutsdatter, Charter Members of East Norway Lake Lutheran Church.

Reier Thorson was born December 28, 1841 at the farm Braaten in Sigdal Parish, Buskerud, Norway. He was the youngest of six Children born to Thor Andersen and his wife Ingeborg Halvorsdatter.

In 1864, Reier and his brother Nels left Norway and immigrated to the United States. Reier left Sigdal on May 3. He and Nels were evidently following their brother Thor who had emigrated in 1861. Family tradition relates that Reier purchased a clock in New York City that he carried west with him. That same clock is still owned by a descendant. The brothers all eventually came to the large Norwegian community that existed around Decorah, Iowa. Both Thor and Nels purchased land near each other in Winneshieck County in 1863 and 1864, respectively. Reier apparently did not acquire any land in Iowa, but probably lived and worked with his brothers there.

In 1867 all three Thorson brothers moved from Iowa to the Norway Lake community in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota. Reier purchased land in Sections 22 and 27 of Lake Andrew Township, building his home in Section 22. His brother Nels, the father of Lars Nelson, died very soon after arriving in the community (July 1867), and was one of the earliest burials in the East Norway Lake Cemetery.

Reier married Kjersti Knutsdatter (1838-1907) on December 7, 1870 at Norway Lake. Kjersti was born at the farm Buinsetra in Flesberg Parish, Buskerud, Norway. Her parents were Knut Halvorson and Beret Hellecksdatter.

Reier and Kjersti had four children:

1. Caroline, born 4/3/1872;
2. Julia, born 1/5/1874;
3. Carl Theodore, born 10/16/1876; and
4. Anne Birgitte, born 1/1/1881.

On March 26, 1873, Reier took the oath to become an American citizen. Reier Thorson was active in the affairs of his community, and respected by his neighbors. He served in a number of local positions. He was one of the people who petitioned for the creation of Lake Andrew Township. He served as township Constable of a time, as Assessor in 1874; was elected as Lake Andrew township clerk, and served for 23 years. He also served as township treasurer for 10 years.

Like other area pioneers, he experienced a number of hardships. In 1873 there was perhaps the most severe blizzard in Minnesota recorded history that took the lives of a number of people. A more personal hardship occurred to Reier's family on October 20, 1882, when a fire destroyed this barn and some 80 tons of hay stacked near the barn.

Kjersti died April 23, 1907, and Reier died July 27, 1919. Both were buried in the First East Norway² Lake cemetery.

The text of this article was furnished by Jay Liedman. Footnotes were added by Earl O. Knutson.

1 The Norwegian part of Reier's life was also covered briefly in *Sigdal og Eggedal, Volume III, Gaard of Slekt*, by Andreas Mørch. p. 1154

2 The modern name is First Lutheran Church of Norway lake.