

Bjørn Bjørnsen Teige¹ and Kresti Nilsdatter, Charter Members of West Norway Lake Lutheran Church

In a Norwegian history book², there is a Bjørn, born in 1820, the 6th child of Bjørn Håkensen and Ingeborg Aslaksdatter on the farm Upper, Northern Teige in Eggedal, Buskerud, Norway. Although the ages in other records mismatch quite seriously, it is quite certain that this Bjørn is the same person as the charter member cited above.

In the same Norwegian history book, it is written³ that this Bjørn bought one of the Teige farms. He married Gjertrud Aslesdatter in 1847. Their children were Bjørn (the second) born 1848, Ingeborg born 1849, and Rønnaug born 1854. After Gjertrud's death in 1855, Bjørn married Guri Hansdatter in 1858 and this couple had a daughter Gjertrud born 1859.

In the 1865 census of Norway⁴, there is Bjørn Bjørnson, born 1822 in Sigdal Prestgjeld, listed as a farmer-owner. With him are: wife, Guri, b. 1827; son, Bjørn, 1848; daughters Ingeborg, 1850; and Gjertrud, 1859.

Bjørn was later forced⁵, under Norwegian law, to sell to a previous owner's family. Bjørn's family lived for a time at a farm called Tunga in Krødsherad. There Guri died. The widower Bjørn left for America in 1869, taking with him his living children Bjørn the 2nd, Ingeborg, and Gjertrud. This emigration is also registered in a church exit record⁶ dated 17 April 1869.

In the 1870 census⁷ of Benson Township, Chippewa County⁸, there are in household #111 Bjorn Bjornson (age 45), Amelia (20), and a male whose first name is recorded as Bjornson (21). Based on their ages, these are probably the widower and his two oldest children. How Ingeborg got transcribed as Amelia is a mystery.

In the 1875 census Bjørn Bjørnson, age 52, born in Norway, resides in household 15 of Camp Lake Township in Swift County. In the same household is Kresti "Nilson" age 47, born in Norway. In the neighboring household, 16, there are Aslak Thompson and Ingeborg Bjornson, age 24, born in Norway, and three children. Very likely, these are Bjørn's son-in-law, daughter, and grandchildren.

In the 1880 census, Bjorn (age 52) and his wife Chresli (50), both born in Norway, reside in household #50 of Norway Lake Township, Kandiyohi County. Next door, in #51, are Bjorn Bjornson 2nd (age 32), his wife Kari (24), their daughters Julia (7) and Ingeborg (2/12). Kari and Julia were born in Wisconsin, Ingeborg in Minnesota.

In the 1885 census, Bjorn (age 68, born Norway) and Kresti (age 55, born Norway) is in household 25 of Norway Lake Township, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota. Bjorn's son Bjorn and family are in household 27.

Bjørn Bjørnsen (Teige) died^{9,10} in Norway Lake Township on March 17, 1886 at age 63.

No record was found showing Bjorn's final resting place. As for Kresti Nilsdatter, no information of any kind was found apart from the three census citations.

There is a sadness in the life of Bjørn Bjørnson. Twice widowed in Norway, forced to sell the Teige farm, he followed his younger brother to America, but without a wife as helpmate. His year of birth is probably 1822 but his age is incorrectly recorded in many censuses. The date of death seems firm but His final resting place is not known. His death occurred at a time of turmoil in the church, so his grave may have gone unmarked. Strange also: his name is not mentioned in a famous 1916 local church history book.

No record was found of Bjørn and Kresti's marriage. Perhaps a twice-widowed man was not keen on marrying again.

To recap, Bjorn's children that immigrated with him were:

- Bjorn, who left a substantial legacy (see separate biography);
- Ingeborg, no information was found aside from the possible connection in the 1875 census;
- Gjertrud, no information was found; perhaps she did not survive the ocean voyage.

Report prepared by Earl O. Knutson, July 2018.

1 Although listed as Bjorn Teige in the charter member list, it appears that he rarely used the name "Teige."

2 Sigdal og Eggedal, Volume III, Farms and Families. By Andreas Mørch. page 1041. On the same page, the 11th child of this couple is Kristoffer, born in 1834. Both brothers emigrated and became charter members of West Norway Lake Church.

3 *Ibid*, page 1036.

4 Viewed at http://www.rhd.uit.no/folketellinger/ftliste_e.aspx?ft=1865&knr=0624&kenr=016&bnr=0037&lnr=000

5 Mørch, *loc cit*, page 1036

6 <https://media.digitalarkivet.no/view/1132/139>, Udflyttede section, entry dated 17 April 1869

7 This and the other 3 US census citations were accessed by searching in ancestry.com

8 Benson Township is in the north of the modern-day Swift County, which was organized in 1870,

9 Illustrated History of Kandiyohi County, 1905. Page 343. Viewed at <http://cdm16022.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15160coll5/id/944>

10 Register of Deaths in the Township of Norway Lake, viewed at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society. He is listed as Bjorn B. Teige.