

Lasse (Lewis) and Ingrid Thorsness, Charter Members of West Norway lake Lutheran Church

Lasse was born on the Torsnes farm in Balestrand, Sogn au Fjordane, Norway to Mons Lasseson and Unni Nilsdatter Huke in April of 1837. Lasse emigrated to America in April of 1847 with his widowed father Mons and his five young siblings. They settled first in Columbia County, Wisconsin, where the family farmed until a few years after his oldest brother Marcus' death in 1855 at a young age. This area was known as Spring Prairie. Lasse married Ingrid Fedje in Rice County in 1863, although I can find their marriage in the index, I have never found the actual license.

Ingrid was born in Balestrand, Sogn au Fjordane, Norway to Ola Iverson Fedje and Ingrid Lassesdatter Borlaug in October of 1838, and baptized in Balestrand. Ingrid's father died in 1856 in Norway when she was 18 (her mother had died 3 years earlier), leaving Ingrid and her even younger sisters orphans. That same year Ingrid emigrated to America with her 20-year-old brother Johannes and two younger sisters.

Lasse and Ingrid Thorsness settled first in Goodhue County, Minnesota and later moved to Wheeling Township in Rice County in 1865. Also listed on the plat map of Wheeling Township is an Anders Fedje who could be an uncle. Their first two children, Martin (1864) and Mattie (1866), were born in Rice County. The Thorsness family is shown owning land in Norway Lake Township, Kandiyohi County in 1868. Lasse's family history states that they moved here shortly after the Civil War. They must have moved back to Wisconsin, as their third child Annie was born in Wisconsin in 1870. I cannot locate Lasse and Ingrid anywhere in the 1870 census. The 1875 census shows them living on their farm in Norway Lake Township, Kandiyohi County again with their six children and their hired man Gunder Olson.

Their six children were: Martin (Luella) Thorsness, born 1864, of Hayes Township; Mathea "Mattie" Thorsness, born 1866, of Hayes and Arctander Townships; Annie Thorsness, born 1870, died 1887, buried at West Norway Lake church; Isabelle (Gust) Lindquist, born 1871, of Hazen, North Dakota; Oline (Nils) Nelson, born 1872, of Arctander Township; Josephine Thorsness, born 1874, of Willmar (she also homesteaded her own farm in Hazen, North Dakota for a few years), George Thorsness, born 1875, died 1897, buried at West Norway Lake Church; Nicolene (Gust) Lindquist, born 1877, died 1910, buried at West Norway Lake Lutheran Church; Marcus "Sam" Thorsness, born 1879, of Hayes and Arctander Townships; and Ida Louise Thorsness, born 1880, died 1881, buried at West Norway Lake Lutheran Church. As a note, the widower Gust Lindquist married his first wife Nicolene's sister Isabelle after Nicolene died at the age of 33. And Oline's husband Nils Nelson was the son of Tollef Haugland and his second wife. Tollef's first wife was Oline's aunt Nilsine Thorsness.

By 1877, Lasse and Ingrid have purchased a farm in Hayes Township, Swift County near the shores of Monson Lake where they would live for the rest of their lives. Lasse (or Lewis) farmed on Section 1 in Hayes Township and Section 7 in Arctander Township for the rest of his life. Lewis used the last name Monson (as did his brother Anders Monson) until Anders had a son that he named Lewis Monson. At that point, Lewis switched permanently to the last name Thorsness.

His obituary in the *Kerkhoven Banner* states that he built the grain elevator in Kerkhoven (now the Cargill elevator) and was the grain buyer there from 1885 to 1888.

Ingrid died in October of 1896 at the age of 58 of a bowel complaint, the same thing that killed her son George one year later. Ingrid's sister-in-law Anna Syse, who played the role of visiting nurse in the settlement, wrote that Ingrid took ill while husking corn and the family found her lying in the field in agonizing pain. The doctor arrived, diagnosed it as a hernia, but was unable to save her.

Lasse died in 1903 at the age of 66 and is buried at Monson Lake Lutheran Church cemetery next to Ingrid. The funeral was conducted by Rev. Sotendahl. His obituary in the *Kerkhoven Banner* states: Louis Monson Thorsness, one of the pioneer settlers of Swift County, died at his home Tuesday morning of lung disease after an illness of several weeks. Mr. Thorsness was one of the highly respected men of the community. By all who knew him, he was esteemed for his honesty, faithfulness, and industry, and his death is as much as loss to the community at large as it is to his family."

His married son Martin, and his unmarried children Sam and Mattie continued farming Lewis' farm land until Martin sold it to August and Ida Larson when he retired and moved to Willmar. Sam and Mattie, both unmarried, moved to the Arctander farm where they remained until they died.

Reported by Pat Lindgren References: *Balestrand Bygdebok*, compiled by Gunnar Urtegaard (1991), *Fylkesarkivet Kyrkebok for Balestrand Prestegjeld*, compiled by Gunnar Urtegaard; *Utflyt papers from Sogn au Fjordane*; 1850 census for Kossuth Twp, Columbia County, Wisconsin; Columbia County, Wisconsin land records; Swift, Kandiyohi & Rice County, Minnesota land records; Swift, Kandiyohi, Rice, and Hennepin County birth, marriage & death records; Jackson County, Wisconsin marriage records; Kandiyohi County probate records; 1865, 1870, 1875, and 1880 census records; *For the Sake of the Children* by Ellen Syse Hilleboe (unpublished 1931, held in Rolvaag Library at St. Olaf College); *Sing Unto the Lord*, a history of Monson Lake Lutheran Church (1986)