

## Viskop, Tosten and Ragnild, Charter Members of West Norway Lake Lutheran Church

In the cemetery at West Norway Lake, there is a grave marker<sup>1</sup> inscribed with a closely matching name:

Tosten T Viskop, 1822 -1909.

There is an adjacent marker inscribed:

Ragnild Viskop, 1822-1905

The closeness in birth year suggests that these two are man and wife.

In Norway, there are a pair of farms known by the name Viskop<sup>2</sup>. These are in Flå, Hallingdal, Buskerud. In the 1865 census for that area we find<sup>3</sup>:

Thomas Tostensen, age 67, Husmand med jord (landowner)

Tosten Thomassen, age 44, forpagter (leasee)

Ragnild Pedersdatter, age 44, hans Kone (his wife)

Thomas Tostensen, age 9, deres Søn (their son)

Ragnild Tostensdatter, age 11, deres Datter (their daughter)

And the census record shows that this family lives on Viskop.

A brief account of the family's migration is found in a church history book<sup>4</sup>, as follows:

Tosten Viskop, born in Hallingdal. Married to Ragnild Pederson, born in Hallingdal. They came to Decorah,

Iowa 1871. Tomas Viskop, born in Hallingdal. Came with his parents.

It is interesting that the daughter is not mentioned. She undoubtedly traveled with the family, as she later married Even Paaverud. Ragnild Tostensdatter and Even Thorson took out a Kandiyohi County marriage license and were married at East Norway Lutheran Church on December 31, 1876. The East Norway Lake church marriage record<sup>5</sup> for 1876 identifies them as Ragnild Viskop and Even Paaverud.

The Hope Lutheran Church History<sup>6</sup> includes sections relating to the history of both West Norway Lake Lutheran and Monson Lake Lutheran churches. That history states that between 1871 and 1874, many families settled in Norway Lake, including....Thomas Bishop, Tosten Bishop,... It should be noted that the "sk" sound in Norwegian would be pronounced as "sh" and that in the Norwegian Gothic script V and B look similar. The same Hope Lutheran history shows Tosten Wiskope as a charter member of West Norway Lake Lutheran Church, and identifies him as Mrs. Casper Skindelien's uncle. Mrs. Casper Skindelien's maiden name was Theoline Paaverud.

In the 1875 census of Norway Lake Township, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota there is a possible match:

Thorsten Thompson, age 50, b. Norway; Ragnild Thompson, age 54, b. Norway; and Ragnild, age 19.

Certainty is hampered by the women's ages. The 1880 census lists the family still in Norway Lake Township: Thosten Thomason, age 59, Ragnild, age 58, and Thomas, age 22. The 1895 census lists Tosten and Ragnette Wiscali, both aged 73, still living in Norway Lake Township. This family seems to age in an erratic pattern every 10 years. Their son Tom is not present in 1895. The closest I can get is a T.H. Thompson, age 36, living in Green Lake Township. It is also possible that Tom is living in Stearns or Pope County.

There was a Per Thompson Viskop who also farmed in Norway Lake Township, and is buried in Big Grove Lutheran Church in Brooten. His death certificate lists Thomas and Ragnild Viskop as his parents. Per was born in 1829 (so would be a brother of Tosten) and died in 1913 in Stearns County. He is of interest because his children used the last name Thompson.

Confusingly, there is a Tosten Viskop who died<sup>7</sup> 23 November 1898 (born 1822) who also farmed in Norway Lake Township, and who also lists his parents as Thomas and Ragnild Viskop on the death certificate, but the dates do not work with the gravesite. The birth date on the gravestone matches up with our Tosten Viskop in the 1865 Norwegian census. There is also an obituary for "Torsten O. Viskop"<sup>8</sup>, saying that he left behind a wife and two children. This is the only Tosten Viskop for whom Kandiyohi County has a death record. There is no paper trail for any Tosten who died in 1909 anywhere in the State of Minnesota. **It is tempting to conclude that the date of death on the gravestone is wrong.** Ragnild Viskope (sic) died December 14, 1905 in Norway Lake Township (postal address Brooten) of "old age". She was 83 years, 8 months, and 27 days old upon her death. The birth date matches up with Tosten's 44-year old wife from the 1865 census, and the death date does match up with the woman buried at West Norway Lake cemetery.

Beyond what is listed above, information about this family is scarce. We have not been able to locate, with certainty, pertinent Norwegian church records.

Report prepared by Earl O. Knutson, with help from Pat Lindgren and Thelma Johnson.

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1 The two grave markers can be seen in FindAGrave.com.

2 Norwayparishes.com; search for the farm "Viskop."

3 Arkivverket.no/digitalarkivet; search the transcribed 1865 census

4 "Festskrift - En Fremstilling at det Kirkelige Arbeide Norway Lake fra 1862-1916." Ved Pastorerne Mons Sotendahl og N.J. Njus. page 39.

5 Minnesota Online Marriage System; and East Norway Lake Lutheran Church History, "To God be the Glory"

6 "Hope Lutheran Church, Sunburg, Minnesota. Centennial 1875-1975" Book Committee Chair: Mr./Mrs. L. Sanders.

7 Kandiyohi County Death Index, Book B, page 41, line 19

8 Willmar Tribune, Willmar, Minnesota, November 30, 1898