

June 1, 1926

Biography of Mathias E. Fjelstad

--Alvilda M. Kolberg

1925
Mrs. Robt Allen

The name of the parents of the pioneer were Evan Evenson and Elie Evenson. The name of the pioneer was Mathias Evenson Fjelstad.

Mathias Evenson Fjelstad was born March 30, 1848 at Rinsaker County, Norway. He left Norway at the age of twenty-five in order to find a more prosperous place to work.

On June 24, 1863 he started from Norway on the ship "Kong Svare". The trip was made with no troubles and on July 26 they landed in New York. He went directly from New York to Preston, Minnesota where he lived for eight years. During the fifth year at this place he was married to Karn Fjelstad. They took up farming and one year on account of their crops being taken by a "chance Bug" they sold out their farm and moved to North Dakota. With five other families they took the train to Valley City, where they left their families while the men went ahead to break land for their farms. He settled on Section 24 in Ball Hill township. For many years they lived in a sod house 12x16 feet. They soon found that only milk and honey flowed on the prairie so they purchased oxen and began to break land and command in "gee and ha." Had they seen an automobile in those days they would have thought that lightning and thunder was rolling over the prairie.

The only farm machinery they had in those days were a binder in which they used wire to bind the sheaves, they also had plough and harrows. The products grown on the farms were mainly wheat, oats, barley and potatoes. The wheat was sold at the low price of seventy-five cents a bushel. The grain they raised was chiefly for themselves and they had very little to sell if any.

During the first year there were very heavy storms ensued by a dry spell. For provisions they went with their wagons and oxen the long distance of thirty-five miles over wild prairies over which there were no roads or signs to guide them on their way to Valley City. For fuel they chopped down and hauled trees from the Sheyenne Valley.

Their nearest neighbors were Fritchiof Greenland, Christian Lee, Edward Stai and Lauris Stai.

The winters were very bitter and severe. They consisted of the most horrible blizzards and sleet. After the worst of some of these storms the snowdrifts were so high that all the buildings and near by places were concealed and only smoke seemingly coming from the snow could be seen. Paths had to be dug in order to get to the barn and other buildings. Several times they had to string twine from the house to the barn to guide their way.

To this union were born five children, two of whom are living, Mrs. Conrad Kolberg who at present is living on the old homestead six miles south of Cooperstown, and Martin Fjelstad living at Rawson, North Dakota.

The three deceased boys are Anton, Nels and Nels. Nels, who was born in Minnesota, died at the age of one and a half years and was also buried there. Anton, who was eight years at his death, and Nels who

Biography of Mathias E. Fjelstad
--Alvilda M. Kolberg

was five years, are buried in the Union Church graveyard, eight miles south of Cooperstown.

At present Mr. Fjelstad is living at Cooperstown with his wife. March 30, 1926 he celebrated his seventy-seventh birthday and is seemingly in good health as yet.