

PIONEER BIOGRAPHY

Omund Nelson Opheim (oldest pioneer)

The parents of this pioneer were Mr. and Mrs. Nels Opheim. The name of this pioneer is Omund Nelson Opheim. The pioneer was born on September 29, 1829. He was born in Norway.

He traveled in wagons from the state of Iowa and came to North Dakota in 1879 and settled on Section 12, Township 146, Range 58. Their first home was a log house. The closest place to go and get provisions were at Grand Forks to the mill, but later they went to Valley City.

Their nearest neighbor was L. Martinson at the distance of twenty-four miles.

The machinery they had were walking plows, and a home-made drag. They cut grain with a cradle. They had a team of oxen and sowed by hand. They threshed with a flail. The wheat yielded forty bushels to the acre.

They got their wood from the timber on the farm. The first winter they had not wheat crop so Mr. Opheim took his team of horses (they had not traded off the horses for oxen) and drove up to Goose River where he bought some wheat from another farmer. Other farmers from Goose River accompanied him and they went to Grand Forks to get their wheat ground into flour. They followed along the river valleys because they didn't dare go across the prairie. The trip to Grand Forks took three weeks.

Prairie fires were frequent. When a fire started out the farmers had to plow up furrows and build back-fires. The prairie fires were not so bad around Opheim's farm because of the river. But it did happen that the fire jumped the river.

Omund Nelson Opheim was married to Kari Solberg in Norway. The only descendant of this pioneer is Nels J. Opheim, Cooperstown, N. Dak. Mr. Opheim died August 5, 1885, on the farm.

--Kenneth Monson

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by Kenneth Monson

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- Their closest neighbor was L. Martinson at the distance of twenty-four miles.
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--Kenneth Monson

Cooperstown N.D. Oct 16-36

Mrs Claire Jackson

Hampford N.D.

Dear Madam:

I received your letter today.

Osmond Nelson Ophim's ^{wife's} maiden name was Kari Solberg. They were married in Ulvik Hardanger Norway in 1847.

Mr and Mrs Osmond Nelson Ophim is both buried in the Sheyenne Valley Cemetery this is located on their homestead about 2 miles from the Sheyenne Valley church. This was the first-cemetery in Griggs co. They had 2 children one girl named Martha.

Martha died Jan. 16. 1916 at Jamestown N.D.

and one boy named Nels Johan Cooperstown N.D.

There are seven grand children.

Martin Olaf Ophim Cooperstown

(Katrissa) Mrs Gilbert Anderson Minneapolis Minn.

(Clara Mathilda) Mrs Nels Johanson Princeton Minn.

Osmond Norman Cooperstown N.D.

George Edward " "

(Clara Inez) Mrs Wm Gastrom cooperstown, N.D.
Carl Oliner Bismarck, N.D.

yours truly
Wesley Ophium

THE FIRST SETTLERS IN GRIGGS COUNTY

In the spring of 1879, Omund Nelson Opheim left Decorah, Iowa in the company of Lars Erekte, Hans Seim, Colben Grindoland and Lars Solberg with thoughts only of finding a new home in the Dakotas.

They traveled as most pioneers traveled, with horses and covered wagons. In St. Paul, they stopped to inquire about unclaimed land with good timber. Here they were given the name of a surveyor whom they were instructed to visit upon their arrival in Fargo. This man informed them that "there was no better land in the world than that along the Sheyenne River". He also gave them a plat of this land, so they journeyed on anxiously anticipating the country where they were to make a new home for themselves and their families. In Fargo, too, they traded their horses for oxen as the ox was much sturdier than the horse and better suited to this part of the country at that time.

Upon their arrival at Valley City, they proceeded south, but found all of that land taken for a distance of at least fifteen miles, so they returned to Valley City and then went in quest of land the surveyor had told them they would find along the Sheyenne.

No one had, as yet, settled at this particular point, but when these men saw the land they were satisfied, and they unanimously decided that this would be where they would establish their new homes.

They ordered their mail sent to the Newberry post office over on the Goose River, and this was a distance of twenty-four miles from the place where they were locating on the Sheyenne. One of the party, Lars Solberg, a brother of Mrs. Opheim, decided to settle on the Goose River when he saw it as it appealed to him although the rest were very anxious to return to the Sheyenne. The other members of the party pleaded with him to come back. They pointed out to

him the disadvantages of splitting up at this time and what it would mean to their families, but he had fully decided that the Goose River locality was where he wanted to make his future home, so they returned to the Sheyenne valley without him.

On their return to the Sheyenne they went up the Goose River to its source and then across to the Sheyenne, following it to the point which they had first chosen and where Mr. Opheim built a log cabin, which was undoubtedly the first home in what is now Griggs County, and which cabin is now located on the Court House grounds in Cooperstown. The lime used for plastering the house was obtained by burning the limestone found upon the premises.

After building the cabin in 1879, Mr. Opheim returned to Iowa for his ~~family~~ possessions, going most of the way by train, and returning in a covered wagon with his family in the fall.

Needless to say, the hardships of these pioneers of Griggs County were many, for even flour was a luxury and the nearest point at which it could be obtained was Grand Forks. During the winter of 1879 it took three weeks to go there and purchase it.

The crops were sown by hand, and dragged with a home-made drag. The grain was cut with a cradle and threshed with a flail. Then, in order to separate the grain from the chaff it was necessary to throw it across the room. The wheat, of course, was heavier than the chaff and thus it would go further and so be cleaned.

In 1888 they had their first term of school for the children. It was held in Mr. Opheim's log house, and Mr. Ole Saxungard was the first teacher; also the first teacher in Griggs County.

Grund Nelson Opheim, locally called "Pioneer Nelson", the acknowledged first settler in Griggs County, who settled in the county in 1879, was born September 29, 1829 at Ulvik, Hardanger, Norway and

at that place, in 1847, was married to Miss Kari Solberg.

Anon Nelson or Omund Opheim, as he was later called, tried to bring a Norwegian colony but failed because nearly all of the desirable land was taken before his settlers could come. His home was a well-known stopping place in the early days. The early pioneers in the Sheyenne Valley recall the hospitality of the Opheims and relate how Mrs. Opheim "good soul" worked early and late to accommodate the new comers to Griggs County.

Omund Nelson Opheim or "Pioneer Nelson" was found August 5, 1885 in his wagon at his farm home, dead. The horses had run away and this wild ride was over the Sheyenne bridge and through Mardell, a ghost town now, to his home on the river. Mrs. Omund Nelson Opheim died December 26, 1908. They are both interred in the Sheyenne Valley Cemetery, located on their homestead on section 18 in what is now Washburn Township.

Two children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Opheim. Their daughter, Martha died at Jamestown, January 10, 1918. Their son, Nels Johan, is living at Cooperstown. There are seven grand children, Martin Olaf Opheim, Cooperstown, N.D.; Katrina (Mrs. Gilbert Anderson) Minneapolis, Minnesota; Clara Nathilda (Mrs. Nels Johanson) Princeton, Minnesota; Carl Oliver Opheim, Bismarck, N. Dakota; Omund Norman Opheim, Cooperstown, N. Dakota; George Edward Opheim, Cooperstown, N. Dakota; and Clara Inez (Mrs. Wm. Bostrom) Cooperstown, N.D.

Bibliography: Nels Opheim, son of "Pioneer Nelson"
Cooperstown, N.D.

Cooperstown Courier, August 5, 1885
Cooperstown, N.D.

Griggs County Sentinel - Courier
Cooperstown, N.D.

Bibliography: (continued)

W.H. Carleton, who came to this county in 1882
Cooperstown, N.D.

Claus Jackson, sheriff of Griggs County in the '80s.
Hannaford, N.D.

A letter written by Omund Nelson Opheim, dated August 5,
1879 at Sheyenne River, to his wife, who was in Iowa.
This letter is in the possession of Nels Opheim, who
resides at Cooperstown, N.D.

"Normanden i Amerika " by Martin Ulvestad
Volume I-page 66.

Government Surveyors 'Records
Published in six volumes
In office of County Auditor
Cooperstown, N.D.

THE FIRST SETTLERS IN GRIGGS COUNTY

A settlement in 1880 in what is now Romness Township included Mr. and Mrs. John Hogenson and children, Helen and Edward from Fillmore County, Minnesota, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Mathieson, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Qualey and five children from Minnesota. Also, Mr. and Mrs. Ole B. Olson and sons, Gilbert, Bernt, Martin, and Theodore from Iowa, John M. Dahl, A. E. Lybeck, Mrs. Anna Nelson and children, Andrew, Nels, and Marie from Iowa, and Andrew C. Knutson from Wisconsin. Iver Seim from Iowa settled just across the line. The above were Norwegians, hence they chose the Norwegian place name, "Romness". John Hogenson took land on section 16 in Romness Township, as did Peter Mathieson. Ole B. Olson "squatted" on section 24, Andrew C. Knutson and Gilbert Olson on section 35. Mrs. Anna Nelson took land on section 22. John M. Dahl "squatted" on section 36 and Martin Johnson, on section 6 of Township 147 N. and R. 58 W.

A settlement in 1880 in what is now Washburn Township included C. P. Bolkan, who took land on section 34, John Terfin from Iowa settled on section 26; Ole Havig took land on section 34; Ole Johnson Skrein took land on section 26, and Arund Fluto took land on section 26. Omand Nelson Opheim had settled on land on section 12 of this township in 1879.

Alex Chalmers, John Atchison, and Alex Saunders from Scotland, and Arne Luckason came to Griggs County in 1880 and took land in what is now Sverdrup Township. Arne Luckason "squatted" on section 10; John Atchison and Alex Saunders on section 24, and Alex Chalmers on section 22.

Bibliography: John Hogenson, pioneer in Romness Township
Cooperstown, N. D.

Government Surveyors' Records
Cooperstown, N. D.

Children of John Atchison, Ole Olson, P. Mathieson,
Cooperstown, N. D.

Rollin C. Cooper and his brother, T. J. Cooper, who had been successful in mining ventures in Colorado, arrived in what is now Griggs County, in 1880, looking for land. They bought railroad land, secured soldiers' script for some, took pre-emptions, homesteads and tree claims for themselves and their friends. About seventy friends and relatives of the Cooper brothers, from St. Clair, Michigan, came in 1881-1882 and formed the "Cooper Settlement", which later became the town of Cooperstown.

Bibliography: R. C. Cooper, pioneer
St. Petersburg, Florida

Judge W. H. Carleton
Cooperstown, N. D.

E. D. Stair, first publisher of "Cooperstown Courier"
Detroit, Mich.

Wm. Glass, Licenser Land and Loan Agent at Cooperstown
Big Timber, Mont.

from interview by Hannah Lende

Mrs. W. J. Opheim

Mrs Opheim

Mrs. Opheim came from Hardinger, Norway on the steamboat with her parents in May 1879 to Decorah, Iowa. There she stayed two years and went to school for two months in a church basement in Decorah. Her father was a night watchman at Luther College, Decorah, and her sister a cook at the same place. After staying in Decorah two years, they moved to Osain, Iowa where Mrs. Opheim attended school for several months.

Mrs. Opheim's father had had of some work at a place in Mpls. they called the "Glass Block"; a building covering a block and consisted mostly of glass all around, so he and his family went to Mpls. by rail and stayed there for a year. From there they came ten miles west of Portland where they farmed for five years until they moved to their farm in Washburn township. Mrs. Opheim was thirteen years old then. At the age of sixteen she was confirmed by Rev. T. H. Larson.

As time went by she attended house parties, and other simple social gatherings they had. Mr. Opheim was a neighbor of hers and very often attended these parties with her. They were married in 1893 at his place by Rev. T. H. Larson.