

Biography of Ole Jorgen Omundson Soma
--William Sharpe

Ole Jorgen Omundson Soma was born in Norway near the city of Sandnes on the 28th day of October, 1853. His parents were Omund and Agnethe Omundson. He left his home in Norway in 1882 because he believed North Dakota would prove a more profitable place to farm.

So many immigrants were coming to America at the time that no immigrant boats were available at the date of his sailing, so that he had to take an Oslo boat to Amsterdam. Here he remained for five days. Then to London where they were delayed five days. A cattle boat on the Crown Line was slightly remodeled to accommodate immigrants. The rooms in this boat were very filthy. For fourteen days they sailed the Atlantic Ocean. The journey ended in a panic as there was a shortage of coal and food.

Arriving in New York the immigrant train carried them to Chicago at a break neck speed, the train neared a large bridge, at the moment they reached the bridge the train jumped the rails, slid several rods along the ties. Mr. Soma relates that for a few moments he feared this to be his last ride. Nothing serious happened but a delay of a few hours until a new engine could come to relieve. At Chicago they left on a smaller train for the Dakotas. Entering the Red River Valley it seemed as if the train were entering the ocean. As far ahead as one could see, the valley was flooded, covering the rail by several inches.

In the latter part of March, 1882, Mr. Soma reached Valley City to look for land. He looked for land south of Cooperstown where he took a homestead. He erected a frame shanty where the Shepard Farmer's Elevator now stands. His land is located in range 159 and township 145. He dug his barn four feet deep into the ground, 24x40 feet and proved very efficient. When going to town for provisions he drove with one ox and one horse. Cooperstown was then a village of a few abodes. His neighbors were Elling Johnson, T. T. Fuglestad, Andrew Benson, Mr. Montgomery, and Mr. Zimmerman. For five years he plowed with oxen, using five; two for seeder and three for drag. Using all at once he managed to cover much space in short time. He used a binder drawn by oxen for harvesting and Swen Aalgaard threshed for the entire community. Very dry years followed but Mr. Soma's land was low which insured good crops each year. Wheat and oats were the general crops he raised. For fuel, buckwheat and grass seed screenings from the elevator were burned. Fuel seemed unattainable but he hauled oak wood from the Sheyenne River.

One year a large prairie fire swept down from the northwest with heavy wind. The corner of the fire was aimed directly for the school house. With wet sacks Mr. Soma and help managed to keep the fire from the school house and buildings. One March, after comparatively fine weather, a fierce blizzard raging three days froze many cattle grazing in sloughs and vicinity. The storm was so fierce that windows were blown in some shacks. Indians sometimes passed thru vicinity on way to Devils Lake.

In 1885 Mr. Soma was married to Miss Gurina Froiland. She died and

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he married Miss **Lina Lee**. After half a year of married life she died and in 1902 he married Gina Kydland. To his first wife were born Omund, Oscar, and Jonas Soma, all of Cooperstown and Mrs. Frank H. Pickett living at Truman, Minn. Children from the last union are Lise, Torger, Ingvald, Gurina, Mildred, and Judith. Five grandchildren, Joyce and Beila, Soma, Howard and Irene Soma and Erle Pickett.

Mr. Soma is now residing on his farm five miles south of Cooperstown, his original farm being managed by his son, Omund.

Biography of Ole Jorgen Omundson Soma
--Mildred Soma

Ole Jorgen Omundson Soma was born October 28, 1853 in Stavanger, a locality near Sandnes, Norway. His mother and father are Omund Soma and Agnette Soma.

Jorgen left Norway because he had read that there were good chances of getting land in America. The best chances were supposed to be in North Dakota and so he went there. He traveled on a cattle boat, which stunk worse than a pig pen, to New York. From there he traveled by train to Valley City. It was in the time of the Red River Valley flood and so it felt like going across the Atlantic Ocean again, only this time on a train. He walked from Valley City to what is now Shepard.

Arriving in April, 1882, he immediately got possession of the homestead in Section 12, range 57, and Ball Hill Township. A small shanty served as his first house. The nearest town was Valley City, to which he made his trips by foot. Benson, Elling Johnson, Montgomery, and Zimmerman were his closest neighbors.

All the machinery he had was one plow, one drag and one wagon. He also had five oxen. For fuel he used cow dung and grass-seed, the former was gotten in pastures. There were no schools nor churches when he came to this locality.

Jorgen's hardships were many! He lived through many blizzards. In one of these the oxen froze to death in the middle of a slough. In order for the men to get to their barns they usually tied twine to the house and then wandered towards the barn, but in this particular case they were not able to get to the barn in any way.

Once a building caught fire. The wind was furious! Jorgen and the neighboring people came to its rescue. They used wet gunny sacks to kill the fire. They suffered the loss of one straw stack and part of the building.

In winter he had to drive his oxen one and one-half miles every day to a certain slough where he watered them. There was no water closer than that!

In 1885 he married Gurina Froiland at an old shanty near here.

At present he is residing five miles south of Cooperstown.

PIONEER BIOGRAPHY

Ole Jorgen Omundson Soma

Ole Jorgen Omundson Soma was born in Norway near the city of Sandnes on the 28th day of October 1853. His parents were Omund and Agnethe Omundson. He left his home in Norway in 1882 because he believed North Dakota would prove a more profitable place to farm.

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Ole Jorgen Omundson Soma (continued)

last union are Lise, Torger, Ingvald, Gurina, Mildred and Judith. Five grandchildren, Joyce and Leila Soma, Howard and Irene Soma and Erle Pickett.

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Ole Jorgen Omundson Soma

by William Sharpe

Ole Jorgen Omundson Soma was born in Norway near the city of Sandnes on the 26th day of October, 1853. His parents were Omund and Agnethe Omundson. He left his home in Norway in 1882 because he believed North Dakota would prove a more profitable place to farm.

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