

June, 1928

Biography of Rasmus K. Valentine
--Inga Valentine

Rasmus K. Valentine was born September 2, 1878 at Svenborg, Denmark. His childhood days were spent on his father's home, together with his three brothers and three sisters. He gained his education in a country school house where the rod was the master of learning. After he was confirmed, he was sent out to work in the neighborhood, to earn his own living.

At the age of twenty he set sail for America. Like many others, his chief interest was to see the world and lured by fascinating stories of the "get rich quick country." He crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the St. Paul steamer. The weather being fairly good, the trip lasted fourteen days.

He arrived at his destination at Amboy, Minnesota, a stranger. He chose this place as his brother, Andrea, who had already been here for seven years, was working near here. Here Rasmus received a job on a farm. The operating of a farm here was carried on somewhat different from what it is in Denmark, and the hardships he encountered were many.

First was speech. Norwegian and Dane may sound quite a bit alike to us now, but to one who had never heard it before, it was hard. Then there were many people who spoke only English.

During the first two years he was here, he went to town only twice or so. The wages he received were about seventeen dollars a month and during the winter months, he worked for his room and board.

Harvesting the crop in Denmark was done by hand, while here they used the earlier form of a binder.

Threshing operations were not of the modern means in Denmark. They used a small machine that stood in a room in the granary occupying very little space while threshing. The machines here were of the larger type, requiring several men to run it. Throughout the threshing season, which lasted all fall and early winter, the men saw and felt many hardships. And so on with the other farming operations.

On Sundays all the neighbors would go to church in a wagon drawn by horses or mules. This was great style as the people never dreamed of self propelling vehicles.

After Rasmus had worked here for seven years, he and his brother sailed for their home in Denmark for a three months visit with relatives and friends who were very anxious to hear the tales of this country.

He and his brother returned to America again as working conditions here were better. Two years later he went to Denmark again where he was united in marriage to Miss Marie Nielson.

Together they came to Minnesota where they settled on a rented farm six miles southeast of Amboy. Three children were born to this union, two boys and a girl.

Marvin Arnold was born February 7, 1910 on the Pete Peterson farm. Here they lived a year and then moved to the E. K. Rue farm where Inga Marianne was born on Jyly 3, 1911 and Niels Valdemar Nordstrom on May 5, 1913. He and his family lived on the E. K. Rue farm for about nine years. In 1916 Rasmus and his brother-in-law, Simon Nielson, went to North Dakota to buy land. At this time there was a westward movement to North Dakota where the land was very fertile and sold cheap to increase settlements in North Dakota.

He purchased a half section of land five miles southwest of Blabon, from George Warner of Hope. This farm was known as the old Brown's homestead in the early days; a place where the farmers from the west stopped on their way to Hope, the closest town.

In the fall of 1918 he moved with his family to North Dakota where the climate was better, to improve his health. He is still residing on this farm with his family.

A Pioneer Relates

Bib: Minneapolis Tidende

June 16, 1932

(Translated Jan. 17, 193(from the Norse language by Mr. I.A.Kampen
former Co. Supt. of Schools, Griggs Co.)

John E. Vangen, Bimford, N. Dak., called at the "Tidende's" office while attending the church meeting in Minneapolis. Vangen is one of the sturdy pioneers at Lake Sibley, where he has resided since 1863.

Vangen has much of interest to relate. It was in 1871 he left his birthplace Hauesetera, Ullensaker, Norway, and came to America. He crossed the Atlantic on the sailing vessel "Nordlyset". It took 14 weeks to cross the ocean. The worst of it was that the food and drinking water were running dangerously low. For 14 days they had little or nothing to drink and eat; barely enough to keep alive. Finally they landed at Newfoundland where they secured provisions and also tobacco. It was the sweet English tobacco which tasted so good that even the women liked to try it.

The first year and a half he spent in Minneapolis, then moved to Northfield, Minn. In 1883 he went to Dakota and came to Lake Sibley. The soil appeared fertile and there was plenty of water and grass--in face the land looked good to him and he took a homestead and settled down. But it was rather dreary to begin with, far between the neighbors. The nearest white neighbor to the west was 18 miles away. To make up for it, there were crowds of Indians who trekt from the Devils Lake reservation to the reservation at Sisseton. On the trips the Indians generally remained at Lake Sibley several days, often an entire week. There could be up to 30 Indian tents at a time. But the Indians were honest and peaceable. From Vangen they often borrowed one thing and another, but they always returned what they borrowed. Once he gave them something they did not use. He had just butchered and the Indians came and begged for some meat. Vangen gave them a large piece, and he thought they needed salt with it so he threw in a bag of it. The salt he later discovered left untouched. Evidently salt was not a part of their recipe for cooking.

Lake Sibley is a historic place, and several things could be discovered around the lake. The lake is named after the well known Minnesota governor and general in the Indian War, Henry M. Sibley, and here he built camp Atchison, July 8, 1863. At that time there were 4,000 men assembled and they had in the course of one day dug many long trenches and fully prepared to battle the Indians. Most of these trenches was on land belonging to Vangen, but could not be considered as of any special value as instruments for farming, and in course of time he leveled them out. But on the land of his neighbor, Nels Thune, there is still some remnants of the trenches. Thune has deeded the trenches to the North Dakota historical society and a fence has been put up around the place. On the highest point of Thune's land there is also a grave. For a long time people thought it was an Indian grave, but it has been established that a soldier of Sibley's force is buried there. George Brent is his name, and he lost his life over near the present village of Courtenay when his gun went off as he dismounted from his horse. The government has erected a monument over his grave.

Vangen and Thune found many things that reminded them of the Sibley expedition against the Indians. Vangen found a cook stove used by the soldiers. At that time he did not think that old scrap iron like that had any historic interest and he dumped it on a stone pile where pieces of the stove has since remained. He thought more of a sword which was picked up, and he gave the finder a dollar for it. He sold it later for five dollars and considered it a good bargain; but the buyer sold it again

receiving twenty-five dollars for it.

Big piles of buffalo skulls and bones lay scattered over the prairie. Indian arrows in the skulls testified to the manner of death of the animals. These bones were a source of income to the settlers. They picked them up and sold them for as high as 16 dollars a ton. It gave Vangen money to buy lumber for a frame house so he could move out of the sod shanty. However, the bone piles did not last long when the Indians found out that the bones were worth money. They swarmed everywhere over the prairie picking up the bones.

Vangen also has much else of interest to relate from pioneer days and later. It was not always easy to get along. There were few farm machines and implements in those days; no modern threshing machines, only those operated by horse power. Often it got late into the winter before threshing was finished. Vangen recalled one time he threshed for Gabriel Gabrielson, at New Year's in bitterly cold weather.

Lake Sibley later became a rendezvous for hunters. There was no fish in the lake, but an enormous lot of geese, and hunters came from far away places. From Chicago there were many and those Chicago nimrods were anything but dry. They brought large liquor kegs along and they drank firewater by the pailful. It was not difficult to secure roast duck. Vangen once fired a couple of shots into a flock of geese and then picked up 13 geese. However, the birds did considerable damage to the crops, especially in the fall of the year.

Much have changed around Lake Sibley since Vangen came there in 1883. His settler's sod shanty has long ago given way to a fine, modern two and one-half story dwelling and the virgin lands have become fields and meadows, the result of a long life of work and industry. Vangen, as most farmers, is wondering how things will turn out if better times and more equitable conditions for the farmers do not come soon. It was often difficult in the old days, but the farmers got along and forged ahead, while now many farmers lose everything which they have struggled to obtain these many years.

June, 1932

John P. Vangen

From interview by Hannah Lende

John Vangen was born April 19, 1858 in Olsaker, Praestfeld, Norway. In 1871 with his father, he left Norway for America. They went in a sailboat named the Noliase. After fourteen weeks on the water they landed at Quebec. From Quebec they went to Milwaukee, and by train to St. Paul. Mr. Vangen's father got work in a sawmill, but there was no work for John. He walked to Minneapolis and got work for his board, for a married couple. His father soon after worked on the railroad. Mr. Vangen stayed at this place for one and one-half years.

In 1873 Mr. Vangen's mother came to Minneapolis with her five children. Very shortly after, she died from small pox. The rest of the family went to Goodhue County, Minn. in 1873, where each child was taken into some other family. John was old enough to earn a living and took to hiring out to farmers.

In 1875 John Vangen was confirmed, and learned to read. His father and he bought some land in Northfield, Minn. and farmed there for seven years. He was married in 1881 to Bertha Hanson in Fairbairn, Minn. by Reverend Peterson.

Mr. Vangen then left the farm to his father and in 1884 with his brother, Carl, and Andrew Overby, started for Dakota territory. He took with him some stock, ^{four} two oxen, horses, and machinery. He came to Cooperstown and took a preemption on section ²⁰ 13, Bryan township.

The first years here Mr. Vangen picked buffalo bones on the prairie and sold them in Cooperstown to the Lawrence Bros. and a Mr. Hagen, from \$8 to \$18 a ton. His sod house and

barn was built right away.

Mr. Vangen's first machinery was bought in Cooperstown in 1886. It consisted of a binder, \$215, a Hepgood plough, and breaker. He put in fourteen acres of wheat this year and was entirely hailed out. In 1888 his crop was froze out. The next year was dry and yielded nothing.

During these years, Mr. Vangen mowed hay and hauled it to Cooperstown, a distance of about thirteen miles, for \$3 a ton.

Mr. Vangen has been out in many snowstorms. Many a time he has walked all the way from Cooperstown to Binford, a distance of about thirteen miles, in severe snowstorms when it was 53 degrees below.

In 1891 there was a good crop, but Mr. Vangen hadn't seeded in very much due to the preceding dry years. He put in thirty-five acres and got 1000 bushels of wheat, some oats, and potatoes out of it. After 1891 the crops were pretty fair up to the recent years. Mr. Vangen kept on buying more land and when the hard times came, he lost it all.

Nine children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Vangen. April 14, 1937, Mrs. Vangen died. Mr. Vangen then left the farm and rented it out to his boys, and moved to Binford, where he now resides.

The Harold Vasfaret family

The Harold Vasfaret family lived at Flaa Norway. Several relatives had gone to the United States to make their homes, so, they, too, decided to leave for the new land. After a long trip by boat and then by train, they arrived at Cooperstown N. Dak on July 1, 1890. Harold Vasfaret, the father, had come 3 days earlier because of an error on the train tickets. Mrs. Vasfaret and two small boys, Gilbert and Halgrim, had been sent first to Canton South Dakota.

Gilbert Auren, a brother-in-law of Harold Vasfaret met them at Cooperstown with a lumber wagon. They went to the Amund Gilbertson farm, where Mr. Vasfaret worked for two years. Mr. Vasfaret and Mr. Gilbertson were brothers, the latter having arrived in North Dakota in 1881. He had lived in Iowa before coming to this state.

In 1892 the Vasfaret family moved to a farm, which would be a mile east of the present site of the Bolkan school. This school house was at that time, near the present site of Harold Auren farm buildings on the west side of the road and south of the house.

The Bolkan School was named for ^{the} Ole Bolkan family who had been living there since 1881. The school house was moved in 1896, because the Bridge School had been built then and some of the pupils from the north side of the school community attended there.

In 1894 the Vasfarets moved to a place near the bridge, where they lived in a two-story log house (Arne Luckasen's). They moved into their present house in the fall of 1901.

Vasfaret, Harold and Mrs. Kari,

 " son Christie m. Hans Loge s. of Sverre Serina Loge

 " son Harlowe m. Constance Peterson

 " ch Eugene, Marjean

Peterson, ~~William~~ ^{Constant} and Mrs. Sofia

 " son William m. Cora Johnson d. of Carl + Gunda Johnson

 " dau. Constance Peterson m. Harlowe Loge

 " ch. Eugene, Marjean.

From Y.C.L. scrap book of Sverdrup No. 1.
by Joyce Klubben, teacher

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" children: Eugene, Marjean

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