

## Biography of Betuel Herigstad

Betuel Herigstad, son of Baar and Karen Herigstad, was born June 26, 1852, in the locality of Ejaderen, near the town of Sandness, Norway. He was united in marriage to Inger Thu in 1879. Two children were born to them before they left Norway.

In the spring of 1881 Mr. Herigstad together with his family, two of his brothers, some other families, and a few single men <sup>emigrated</sup> immigrated to America. He had many reasons for coming to America; It was a new country which offered better opportunities for making a living. The general financial depression, high taxes and expenses in Norway were also reasons.

This group sailed on the "King Sverre" to Hull, where their goods were examined to see if anything was being smuggled through. Then they went by train to Liverpool. From here they started their journey across the ocean April 18, on the "Palmyra". On the trip the propeller shaft broke. After two hours of signaling, a small cattle steamer came to help them. It took them to St. John, Newfoundland here they waited until the ship was repaired, when they again set sail. They reached New York May 20, From New York they took the train to Chicago, stayed there three days and went on to St. Paul. This trip had cost each person about



fifty dollars. From St. Paul they came to Granite Falls Minnesota

where they had friends. Here they bought wagons and oxen, they bought plows, but there was just one team of oxen and a plow for every two farmers. Each man broke about seven acres that summer. The men set out in covered wagons, and some walked to look for homes. After reaching Valley City they turned north, and were guided by the Sheyenne River. On June 12, 1881 they settled down, on section 22, range 58, town <sup>ship</sup> 145, which is now Sverdrup Township. The Eriggs county land had been recommended to them by some men who had come here a few years before. As the land in the county did not get into market until 1882 it could not be filed until then. So the settlers kept their land by "squattling" on them until then.

During the first summer Mr. Herigstad as well as the other settlers broke up a few acres of land apiece, and spent the rest of the time in building dwellings and stables. His first home was built of sod. He had the sod house three months, then he built a log house, and had the sod house for a stable.

Later in the summer he brought his family from Minnesota, who had been left there since spring. Their first winter was a time of hardships, their homes were cold, they did not have much money with which to buy provisions, and



their nearest market was Valley City thirty miles away. Their

provisions had to be stored in the fall as it was almost impossible to get to Valley City in winter time. They made most of the furniture for their huts. At first they had only trunks for chairs. Some made their brooms from tall grass cut in sloughs, and stuffed the pillows with down gotten from cattails, of which there was very many in early days. They cleaned their seed wheat that winter by spreading it out over the table and picked the weeds out with their fingers. A great many spinning wheels were brought over by the Immigrants and were for many years used in the settlement. During the long winter evenings the woman would be carding, spinning and knitting. The men would many times do the carding of the wool. Just about all the stockings and mittens were home-made. They made the candles. Whenever cattle were killed, all the fatty parts which could be used for the food were melted and poured into several vessels half full of hot water. A number of cotton threads from six to eight inches in length were fastened to a small stick long enough to extend across the edge of the vessel used. If a large number of candles were to be made, several such sticks would be dipped quickly into the fluid and then hung up till the tallow on the strings had hardened. Several dozen candles could be made by one person in a few hours.

Their main crop was wheat, which was a very good



grade, but they had many periods of drouth, when they had little or no crop, at these times only their early training in being frugal and economical saved them from giving up.

In 1883 a branch of the northern Pacific railroad was built from <sup>Sandborn</sup> Sandborn to Cooperstown. This gave the settlers a much closer market, a market for buffelo bones was also opened up, the bones sold between ten to twenty dollars a ton. Mr. Herigstad as well as the other settlers gathered <sup>many</sup> many buffelo bones.

The settlers got their wood from the river; the little coal they used they got from the nearest market. On January 12, 1888 he went to the woods after wood, while <sup>he was</sup> there a snowstorm came up. He could not see his way, and he just let the oxen find his way home, they found the way but just got home in time as the storm got much worse. Prairie fires were also common, Mr. Herigstads house was destroyed in one of these, and would have been destroyed another time but was saved by some plowed land which had been plowed up for some potatoes.

The settlers visited with each others, and had many religious services. Their first minister was sent out by the Home Missionary society, and their first meeting was held in a little sod hut which shortly afterwards was turned into a stable.

Mr. Herigstads first neighbors were; Frithof Greenland,



Simon Owen, Henry Johnson, and Mathias Fjelstad.

Descendants of pioneer;

Karen Westley

831 College Ave.

Wheaton,

Ill.

Bard Fjelstad

Pendant D. Orielle

Alberta,

Canada.

Omon Fjelstad

Minot

N. Dak.

Inga Fjelstad

Conrad Fjelstad

Emil Fjelstad

Henry Fjelstad

Lydia Fjelstad

Sylvia Fjelstad

The six last ones have the address of Cooperstown, N. Dak.

Irene Westley

Arla Westley

Cyrus Westley

Roy Westley



John Westley

Ella Westley

Ruby Westley

Howard Westley

Ira Westley

Robert Westley

Esther Westley

The eleven last ones have the address of 831 College Ave. Wheaton Ill.

Jean Herigstad

Roger Herigstad

Eldine Herigstad

The three last ones have the address of Minot, N. Dak.

Dorothy Herigstad

Ardis Herigstad

Marion Herigstad

The three last ones have the address of Cooperstown, N. Dak.

Below is a letter.

"Dear Brother E.:

"The time has come when I can no longer refrain from greeting you with a few words. Although the hundreds and thousands of miles between us make it impossible for us to meet and talk to each other as in days gone by, yet it is well that by letters we may learn of each others doings. It appears strange when I take my pen and sit down to



greet my friends and brothers in the Fatherland in this way; strange sensations surge through my mind and my thoughts wander back among you all; it is as if I were sitting among you in your own homes surrounded by your families. Not only when I am writing do these thoughts and feelings occupy my mind, but often when performing my daily tasks, while alone in the woods, while driving my team of oxen while working in my cellar house or while wandering over the wide prairies, etc., do my thoughts wander back to you and I often feel as though it is only a bad dream that we are so far apart."

"On the whole, however, I can say that I am getting along fairly well. I hope that through others of my letters you have heard of my work here in building my cellar house, of the oxen, and the location of the settlement. And lastly let me say, God be praised, I have been feeling well up to the present. In eight days I expect my family to arrive; I have had to be without their company the whole summer and it has been lonely at times."

"I am not certain whether you are one of those who asked for advice concerning America. On the whole it seems to be a good deal easier to make a living; but there are many hardships connected with the life of a pioneer, especially at first. I should like to see you and others come over, yet consider the matter twice before you leave the Fatherland and the place where your cradle stood. It is not a small matter."

"Dear Brother E.:



"I have just received your letter, thanks. Nothing gives me greater joy

than to receive letters from friends and brothers in the dear Fatherland. It warms the heart to realize that we are remembered by you. God bless you all. We are still getting along well; we do, however, wish that the winter was past, we are a little fearful of the cold, and there is but little money among us with which to purchase the needed provisions for the winter, as during the winter months it will be rather risky to undertake with over the long journey <sup>of 30 miles</sup> over the prairies (of thirty miles) to the nearest market. We are praying for a mild winter in our log and sod cabins, where some of us will have to put up with the bare earth as walls and floors. A pioneer life has many trials and difficulties which are not so easily overcome; if these were better known in the dear old Norway it would probably act as a damper on the craze for America. We have no crop this fall, as we came here so late this spring, but must buy all our provisions until next fall, so it will rather be difficult to get through this first year."

"From a pioneer in Dakota."

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