This is one of the many stories of the hardships faced by the pioneers on their journey here.

Omund Aasland (now spelled Ashland) was born on July 20, 1868 in Stavanger, Norway. His parents and five brothers and sisters started their voyage to America in 1880. They were nearly killed on the first part of the journey from Stavanger to Christiansen when a terrible storm arose. The waves were so high that the ship’s masts would sometimes dip into the water.

They boarded the ship “Thingvalle” to America but it soon broke down and was towed back to Copenhagen for a week of repair work. Omund’s mother was struck with a severe case of rheumatic fever during the voyage and nearly died. Her six month baby was not thriving. Omund’s father and the children had to fend for themselves most of the time. His mother still couldn’t walk when they reached New York and Omund said it must have been quite a sight with his father carrying his mother on his back with the children ranging in age from 6 months to 12 years straggling along behind.

They made it to St. Paul and stayed in an immigrant house for 3 days. Omund said there were filthy men, women, and children sitting about on the floor all smoking or chewing tobacco and using vulgar language.

From there they went to Yellow Medicine County about 150 miles west of St. Paul. Conditions were no better here. The houses were overrun by rats and there was no work to be found. The family thought they had made a big mistake because things weren’t this bad back in Norway.

Omund went to work for a local farmer. A horse kicked him in the head cracking his skull between eyes. The farmer poured some whiskey on his wound and told him to get back to work. Instead he staggered back home to his parents, leaving a trail of blood all the way. He recuperated for a week and then went back to the farmer but the farmer told him he was fired since he couldn’t work with a “wee little scratch”.

He went to work for another farmer and he and another boy were sent out about 20 miles from the farm to herd a large herd of cattle. A severe thunderstorm broke out after that and scattered all the cattle. It took two weeks to gather them up and bring them back to the farm. He decided to walk home and surprise his mother. He arrived in the middle of the night and while feeling his way through the entry he came across his baby sister who had died that day.

The decision to leave Yellow Medicine and go to Dakota Territory became easier. They homesteaded in section 10 of Ball Hill Township. He married Axliana Bull in 1889. She was the daughter of Jens Bull and two of her aunts were Mrs. Sven Lunde and Mrs. Ole Stokka and one of her uncles was Ola Westley, all early pioneers who contributed greatly to the settlement of this area. Omund’s grandson, Gordon Ashland, and many other relatives still live in this area.