

Ole Larsen Ihle by Ihleen Wold Goetz, granddaughter

Ole Larsen Ihle was born in Slattsvea, a cotter's farm under the Stor Ihle farm, north of Hamar, Norway, on October 23, 1878; the firstborn child of Lars and Oline Larsen (Ihle - American surname). He immigrated with his parents in April 1879. They first settled at Pelican Rapids, MN where Ole's father applied for citizenship and the family learned American ways. A couple of years later the family homesteaded in New Folden township, Marshall County, MN. The family attended Bethlehem Norwegian Lutheran Church, New Solum township. Until the first school was opened in 1888, Ole was probably taught by Lavina Rokke at the Andrew Ekman home. English was used exclusively and Ole passed the required state examination for completion of the eighth grade. Ole enrolled in a post grammar school course at North Star College, Warren, where he worked on a farm until he completed his "second grade" teaching qualifications. This enabled him to teach in a New Folden area one room country school, grades one through eight, when he was about 14 years old. He taught for one year, maybe two, but not likely; he hated teaching.

Ole returned to the home farm to help his father, Lars, and brother, Melvin. Lars Ihle was an extremely hard working entrepreneur who sought various forms of work to build the family farm in less than 15 years and to provide for his family. He expected the same work ethic from his wife and nine children. In addition to breaking prairie sod, building first a log cabin and then a clapboard frame house, and adding outbuildings, Lars farmed. He also dug wells and Ole worked with him. I have understood that both father and son were too headstrong to work well together. However, Ole did learn well digging skills and he and Sigurd Myrom became partners in the Ihle-Myrom well digging, windmill installation and house moving business. The partnership lasted many years. Ole's children remembered with pride the countryside dotted with windmills carrying the Ihle-Myrom name on the blades.

On December 17, 1901, Ole married Anna Marie Augusta Gast in Warren, MN. Anna was born in Stolp, Pommerania (Germany) on October 6, 1880. She was the fifth born child of August Sr. and Albertina (Schwienke) Gast. The Gast family had immigrated in 1888 and settled in Marsh Grove township, adjacent west of New Folden township. Anna probably attended the Fairview School at Ellereth and graduated from the eighth grade.

Ole and Anna lived in a Middle River township rented home until about 1905 when they moved to Thief River Falls and bought their first home at 301 Knight Avenue S. It was here they raised their four children. The family was members of the Community Methodist Church, the only English speaking church in town. Anna was active in the Ladies Aid and was always available for cooking and sewing responsibilities at the church. Ole was a spiritual man but he mistrusted organized religion. He did not attend church often. At the time of his death, memorials were donated in his name for the church carillon. Ole loved music.

Ole Ihle was over six feet tall, muscular and lean. He had reddish brown hair before he grayed, very fair skin and high cheekbones. His small green eyes were like his father's, shaped with a Mongolian slant. As I once read of the Vikings, they preferred adventure to domestication. Ole was my idea of a Viking.

Grandpa's business took him away from home a great deal of the time. House moving and church moving became a big enterprise as the westward movement continued through Dakota Territory. Grandpa moved many buildings in North Dakota. His well drilling expertise also took him to Oklahoma during the oil boom. Ole worked in the Oklahoma oil fields and became an enthusiastic, but foolish, investor. He lost his money. In 1922, he ran for Pennington County Sheriff, defeating LaBree. Ole was elected and served in that post for 12 years. During the 1930's, Ole opened a land (real estate) and insurance office in Thief River Falls. Grandpa's love of the land kept him interested and involved with the real estate portion of his business. Until his death, Ole worked on the land he owned east of town where he "grubbed" and "picked stones", the two most physically demanding tasks of land management.

Grandpa was well known for his honesty and integrity. He bought and sold land all of his life and never signed a contract. His motto was that if his word wasn't any good, the paper on which his words were written was worthless. At the time of his death, the estate executor was totally satisfied that anyone who owed Ole money had come forth and reported how much he had left to pay.

Ole and Anna left the small home on Knight Avenue in about 1940 when Ole built the four bedroom house at 325 N Crocker Avenue. Anna died of a stroke on August 19, 1944. Ole remarried in the early 1950's to Clara Schneider, a widow, and they lived on Neal Street. Ole died just prior to his 84th birthday in October 1962. He was buried next to Anna in Greenwood Cemetery, Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

Handwritten notes in cursive script, likely a continuation of the text or a separate entry, partially obscured by the main text block above.

John Ihle by Ihleen Wold Goetz

John (b. 1889 d. 6 Mar 1913) was born in New Folden township, the fifth child of Lars and Oline Ihle. John died during his student days at the University of Minnesota from a fractured vertebra during an amateur wrestling bout. A front page article in the Minnesota Daily, March 11, 1913, says this (in part) about him:

"Mr. Ihle was a substitute on last year's football team, a member of the Daily staff, vice-president of the Agriculture Club and not only interested but active in all the college activities and known and liked by the whole student body. He was a good student. The Agricultural students took a deep pride in his athletic powers and he was a marked man on that campus, but it never affected him and he maintained a native modesty that won for him a host of friends."

John was a Junior in the Agricultural College of the University at the time of his death. He worked on the campus selling the butter and milk produced at the University and made available to area residents. The article continues eulogizing his relationship to the many children who purchased the products for their parents.

John's Minnesota Daily obituary read: "An unassuming, conscientious and thoroughly dependable fellow-worker, a kind, considerate and true friend. John Ihle during his three years in the community left an impression upon its busy life which will not soon be affected. Though working his way through yet he gave much of his time and effort for the good of the University and in the field of its student activities commanded wholesome respect and regard. The staff has profited much from his services and from the friendship more."

John's siblings carried and shared throughout their lives memories of the one who was probably the favorite brother. Ole, possibly others as well, financially assisted John with college expenses. Great Aunt Anna Burmeister recalled John with great love and affection and in addition to his talents and ambition, she declared him to be "so handsome".

A picture postcard (side shot of John standing beside a house) to Anna Burmeister, postmarked Minneapolis, but the date is obscured, reads: "Dear Sister, I had a postal from Millie this morning too. Said she was o.k. I am myself but felt very much grieved to hear that dear Ma is sick. It is my sincere hope, highest desire and wish that she does not get worse but that she will soon be well again. So Art L is of the past, too bad, poor boy. I hardly know how to appreciate the fact that I am well. I was very down hearted a week ago. I got sick the same day that I moved. I was going to send this to Ma but having sent the other to Tillie, I wanted to give you one each. I got your letter about 2 hours ago. I am now in the "U" library. Will go to Chemistry soon."

John is buried at the Bethlehem of New Solum Lutheran Church, New Folden township.

Melvin Ihle by Ihleen Wold Goetz

Melvin was the fourth born child of Lars and Oline Ihle. He was probably the first of the Ihle children born at the New Folden township homestead.

Melvin lived on the homeplace and farmed his entire life. Sometime after his father's death in 1931, Melvin married a widow, Mabel Klockman Weber Jenkins. Mabel had grown children as well as her young son, Bob, who lived with them on the Ihle farm. After Melvin's death and later his mother's death, Bob Jenkins inherited the farm. Bob died young and the farm was sold, probably in the 1970's.

Uncle Mel, as he was known to his nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews as well, was the Ihle family comedian and storyteller. When the white-headed, ruddy complexioned, twinkly blue-eyed, six footer entered the room, his audience gathered. In a thick Norwegian brogue, Uncle Mel described the latest antics of his farm animals, hunting experiences or land management problems. He had a way of noisily inhaling through his teeth and a way of gulping a "ya" to build anticipation in his story. He would relate a simple narrative, creating great suspense and then often end his story with an unpredictable twist. We would laugh until we cried.

The warm personality of Uncle Mel and the culinary competence of Mabel made the Ihle homestead an inviting place to visit. Nephews spent memorable summer vacations working for their grandfather and their Uncle Mel on the farm. In the winter, Uncle Mel would hitch up a pair of horses for cutter rides providing wonderful memories of the Christmas season for all generations.

Mabel and Melvin were lifelong, active members of Bethlehem New Solum Lutheran Church. They are buried in its cemetery.

Melvin Ihle by Ihleen Wold Goetz



The Lars Ihle family were lifelong members of Bethlehem Congregation of the Hauge Norwegian Lutheran Church located 1 1/2 miles south of New Solum Township. The Haugean movement emphasized more congregational involvement in church affairs with less ministerial autocracy, the prevailing philosophy of the traditional Norwegian Lutheran Church at the time. The Ihle and Hagen families were among the first members of the church. Lars, Oline and sons John and Melvin are buried in the church cemetery.

Grandpa (Ole) told me that the original New Folden log cabin was approximately 12 x 12 feet and housed only the essentials, hand-hewn furniture with one bed and a trundle bed for the children beneath it. The trundle bed slept seven children on the straw mattress. Our Great Aunt Anna confirmed this report: she and Thilda were the last two children born and neither of them had to sleep in the trundle bed. The new "big house" was built in 1896, the year of Anna's birth. It had two rooms downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs. An attached kitchen with another bedroom above it was added in 1918. The barn was built in 1912. Anna Ihle Burmeister said that Ole and Melvin tearfully tore down the log cabin, I believe in 1916, when it no longer served any useful storage purpose. The gathered family sorrowfully watched it go. I remember a remodeling and addition to the kitchen, probably in the late 1940's. Melvin assisted his father on the farm until Lars' death in 1931. Gina returned from her North Dakota homestead and kept house, probably after the death of her mother in 1922 and remained until Melvin married Mabel Jenkins. After Melvin's death, Mabel inherited the farm. Her son, Bob Jenkins, became the owner of the farm after his mother's death. Bob died young, the farm was sold, possibly in the 1960's and the big house was torn down.

Great Aunt Anna Ihle Burmeister told me that Lars, her father, was a perfectionist who demanded that his children "move fast". He was apparently a no-nonsense father who provided for his wife and children but who demanded work in return. She cited a memory of her father threatening to whip Ole for failure to accomplish a task in what he considered adequate time. However, she also remembered her father, Lars, as a caring father who helped the children build a snow sled slide one winter, covering the hill with hand-carried water to make the sled go faster. She said Lars loved baseball. Attending local games was his recreation. Great Aunt Anna told me that it was her mother who provided the encouragement for the children. She was the inspiration for acquiring education. Four of her children became teachers, one a dentist, another died while attending the University of Minnesota, one remained on the homestead and the other two homesteaded property in North Dakota. These were amazing accomplishments for an immigrant family during that time period. Breaking prairie sod, building a large, frame home and several out-buildings, as well as feeding, clothing and educating nine children required a productive farm, hard work and additional non-farm income.

I once asked Grandpa Ole what he feared most growing up on the Ihle homestead. I had expected he would say "Indians". The Ihle property lay on the sand deposits left by Lake Agassiz during the ice age melt down. Known as "sand ridges", these north-south trails were free of prairie grasses and provided natural pathways. Roving bands of Ojibway frequented the sand ridges throughout the 1800's. New Folden Township was a part of former Indian lands and settlers concern for uprisings was a recurring fear. But Ole's answer was "prairie fires". Early settlers ploughed firebreaks around their buildings and haystacks to safeguard their property. Quixotic winds picked up chimney sparks, hot



Lars Larsen (Ihle) was born November 12, 1854 and raised in Furnes parish, just north of Hamar, in east central Norway, near Lake Mjosa. Lars Larsen (Ihle) was the fifth born child and second son of Lars Johannesson and Oline Olsdatter. He lived with his parents in Slattsvea, a cotter's farm under the Stor Ihle farm. He worked on that farm prior to and after his marriage to Oline Johannesdatter Tvedt in December 1877. We believe that Oline, born December 5, 1856, was the daughter of Gunnor Olsdatter Tvedt and Johannes Larsen (Rognaldalen/Rognlidalen) who did not marry. Oline's mother died when she was three years old. Oline's grandparents, Ole Olsen and Morle Andersdatter Tvedt cared for Oline until her grandmother died. Then Oline lived with and later worked for her uncle, Erik Olsen Tvedt. She was raised with his children: Marthe, Ole and Gonner. Researchers tell us that Erik Tvedt and his wife Berte, emigrated to the U.S. possibly in 1880 or 1882. Family members tell us that their children were called Ole, Gina and Peter Tvedt, perhaps American names.

The Tvedt's were landed people, residing on a farm or farms which had been in their family for generations. The Larsen's were farm laborers who resided on the Stor Ihle farm for several years. I am told that the Stor Ihle farm was originally called "Ille or Ile" until the land was divided into two Ihle farms and the spelling was changed; one became the "big" farm and the other, the "little" farm, called Stor Ihle and Lille Ihle. As young adults, Lars and Oline worked on the Stor Ihle farm as laborers of some status, as Lars was known as a "husman". As a husman, they had their own house. They probably lived with Lar's parents. Oline tended sheep and goats, made cheese and performed other tasks assigned to the women of the house. Their first son, Ole, was born October 23, 1878.

Lars and Oline and their 6 month old son, Ole, immigrated to the United States in April of 1879. Lars was 25 years old and Oline was 23. Oline was extremely sea sick throughout the journey. She has been quoted as having said that she was so homesick for Norway, she cried enough tears in the new country to fill Lake Mjosa.

The emigrants landed in New York harbor and took a train to Chicago and from there, more than likely, another train to Pelican Rapids, Minnesota. The NW Pacific Railway Company had completed its Red River Valley line in 1878. Lars, Oline and son, Ole, lived with another Norwegian immigrant, Christ Michaelson, in Pelican Rapids, Pelican Township, until Lars built a log cabin. Lars, Oline, and Ole lived about a mile from Eli and Erik Hagen who had also built a log cabin in the Pelican Rapids area. The two families remained there for two or three years. John R. Tunheim in his book, A Scandinavian Saga, page 34, establishes Erik Hagen as the first settler in New Folden Township to file a land claim. Consequently, I believe that his brother-in-law, Lars, was certainly among the first of the New Folden settlers. They each homesteaded 160 adjacent acres in Sections 29 and 32, the southwestern quadrant of the township sometime between 1882 - 1885. The 1885 census of New Folden Township lists both the Ihle and Hagen families. A Scandinavian Sage, pages 25-35, provides a good insight to selecting land and homesteading more than likely relevant to Lars Larsen Ihle.

Norwegian records refer to the emigrating Lars as Lars Larrison. The 1880 census of Pelican Township lists the family as Larsen. Apparently the family assumed the Ihle name when they applied for citizenship. The 1885 census of New Folden Township lists Lars and Oline Ihle with children Ole, Gina, Lena and Melvin.

LARS LARSEN Ihle - OLINA Johannesdatter Tvedt



D. 19 Sept 1962
 This was
 MINNESOTA
 ANNA MARIA Augustin Cast
 LEV Ignatius

DETAILS



locomotive ashes and lightning strikes in addition to smoldering peat kept the early settlers in constant surveillance of fire. I don't believe the this family every suffered any fire losses, but they came to the assistance of neighbors on many occasions.

At a "cousins' reunion" in June, 1993, I asked what they -- the eight assembled grandchildren of Lars and Oline -- remembered of their grandparents. Their recollections were slight, only that Oline had beautiful reddish blond hair which curled in tight ringlets about her face when she was too warm and that Lars was an advocate of the adage "children should be seen and not heard". The immigrants spoke only Norwegian and aside from "pats on the head" communication between them and their English-speaking grandchildren was minimal. They had 20 grandchildren who grew to adulthood.

Ihleen Wold Goetz, great granddaughter of Lars and Oline

[A Scandinavian Saga](#) by John R. Tunheim is a story of the life and times of pioneering in New Folden Township, Marshall County, Minnesota 1882 - 1905. The book is a wonderful collection of the events in the lives and times of Norwegians and Swedes who homesteaded this area. The book includes quotes from Thilda's memories (above) and the family photograph. I bought the book for \$11.00 from the author, 704 S. Third Street, Stillwater, MN 55082 in March of 1993. Jack Tunheim is, as of that date, a St. Paul attorney who resides in Stillwater.