

Kristian Evenson Engen and Ingeborg Olsdatter

by
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It was July 7, 1859 when Gunhild's first child came into the world. As the baby was laid in her arms Gunhild's face gleamed with the joy that only a new mother's face could produce. But with the labors of childbirth behind her Gunhild was now forced to think about her future, as well as her newborn baby's. Since the baby was born out of wedlock it would be a difficult road ahead. After all both of Gunhild's parents were deceased and Gunhild lived with her brother Syver and Syver's son Anders in a small little shack on the sub-farm called Enge. Enge was a part of a much larger farm called Breien. As Gunhild looked at her new baby Syver broke the silence. "Hva heter han?", asked Syver. "What will I call him?" replied Gunhild. "His name will be Kristian Evenson Engen". The Evenson Engen portion of Kristian's name was predetermined. Evenson or Even's son, because the father's first name was Even and "Engen" because they lived on the Engen farm.



The Engen Farm house where Gunhild and Kristian were born

That following month, on August 21, 1859, Gunhild and her friend Lars Syverson Ulberg traveled to Bruflat to meet with "the presten" who was also the administrator of the Fattigkassen, which was a sort of Social Services for the poor. On that day Gunhild made a disposition and declared that a man by the name of Even Jørgenson Gryte of Vestre Slidre was Kristian's father and Lars Syverson Ulberg served as a witness to the testimony. On March 5, 1860 the amount of child support was entered into the document. Even Jørgenson was ordered to pay five speciedaler yearly for the first five years. The next four years he would be ordered to pay four speciedaler. Then the last five years Gunhild would receive only three speciedaler yearly.

Gunhild walked with a limp either from a birth defect or an accident. She was known as "Halte Gunhild" or "Limping Gunhild". On January 2, 1868 Gunhild gave birth to a second son, whom she gave the name "Anton". Anton was formally known as Anton Olsson Hestekind and was the son of Ole Engebretson Breien. Gunhild did not marry Ole either, but she did send Anton to live with Ole's mother. It is reported that Anton was quite spoiled by her as well. In 1886 Anton immigrated to America, settling in Traill County, North Dakota. Later January 1868 Gunhild and Kristian moved to the Espelien Øvre farm, where Kristian worked as a servant. This is also when Kristian

In June 1898 Christian and Ingeborg moved to Westerheim, Lyons County, Minnesota where they stayed just long enough for Ingeborg to give birth to what would be their youngest daughter, her name was Nora Alma Hannah Engen, and she was born in January 1899. In February 1901 the Engens loaded up their steers and livestock on a train and moved farther north to Wadena County, and in that same year on June 11th, Christian, travelled to Wadena and gave a Declaration of Intent for Naturalization. His hopes were to become an official US citizen in the next several years.

The year 1904 brought both joy and happiness and sorrow and tragedy to the Engens. On April 28, 1904 Christian and Ingeborg celebrated the birth of their last child. His name was John Walter Engen. Three months later on Jul 24th he was baptized at "Var Frelzers Norsk Lutherske Menighed". This church was later more commonly called "Our Savior's Luthern Church". Then as quickly as the Engens were blessed earlier that year, tragedy struck the last half of the year. Their son Oliver became ill and past away on September 3, 1904.

On October 17, 1906 Christian once again travelled to Wadena this time with his friends Thore and Andrew Dahlvang, a couple of immigrant Norwegians, who lived close to Christian. On that day Christian made his Petition for Naturalization in Wadena. Both Thore and Andrew were his character witnesses.

Later that year, in December, Clara, who had been dating Herman Hanson, got engaged and it was decided that they would marry that following January. They applied for their marriage license on December 29, 1906 (Clara's twentieth birthday). Seven days later, on Jan 5th, Halfden Trana married them in Oylen. Clara's friend Clara Dahlvang stood up for her and Smerin Peterson stood up for Herman.

Christian and Ingeborg didn't need to wait long for a grandchild. On October 21, 1907 Clara delivered their first grandchild, her name Inga Lorraine Hanson, named for Clara's mother.

On November 4, 1907 the court granted Christian his US citizenship. Along with that Ingeborg too became a US citizen. That following year on Mar 4, 1908 Christian paid a \$45 fee for section 22 in Lyons Township, which he had been homesteading and five months later August 17th he secured 40 acres of section 22 in Lyons Township.

Clara and Herman later added a son to their family on February 24, 1909, however, he only lived for four hours. He was laid to rest on the Eklund farm; Alma Christine Hanson was the third grandchild, born February 3, 1910; Alma was followed by Ida Grace on May 13, 1913; then Harry Clint Hanson on the January 25, 1916, who died that summer on Jun 30th.

World War I had been raging in Europe since 1914. On June 5, 1917, two of Kristian and Ingeborg's sons, Carl and Oscar, travelled to Wadena to register for the draft and on May 30, 1918 Oscar, together with his friend Perry Dahlvang left for Camp Lewis to join the army. In late July of that year Oscar landed in France with his unit. Then, October 31st of that year, Oscar was missing in action and Christian and Ingaborg were not told until early December. To make matters worse Christian and Ingaborg lost their grandchild, Clarence on January 4, 1919. Clarence was Clara and Herman's son and had just been born that previous year in 1918. Not long after this tragedy word was received that Oscar had been found and returned home in April 1919.

Soon another grandchild was born to Clara and Herman, once again a daughter whom they named Helen Marie. She was born on November 21, 1919. Esther

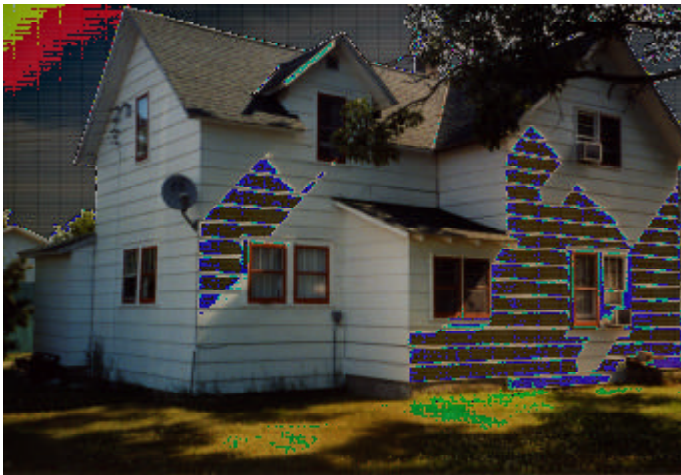
Josephine was the last of Herman and Clara's children, she was born in Oylen on April 9, 1922.

Clara and Herman would bring the grandchildren to visit Clara's parents regularly, often times coming over for lunch or dinner. They would always have potatoes and gravy with bread and butter and coffee. Ingeborg's specialty, however, was cottage cheese, which had big curls. Their granddaughter Esther recalls that it was the best she had ever had!

As was with most women at that time Ingeborg would spin flax or yarn on a spinning wheel she would later use the yarn to make clothes.

Sometimes the Engens would go to town, but doing so wasn't as simple as jumping in an automobile and driving up to the store. They would have to get up at four in the morning and hitch up their oxen to the waggon and take that in to town as they never owned a vehicle

Christian was a wood cutter, he would split wood like no other and if anyone were to take wood from his wood pile he would be right back out there splitting wood again to make the pile the same as it was before the wood was taken off. This habit was probably instilled in him during the time he worked as a servant on the Espelien Øvre farm back in Norway.



George and Nora's house. Where Kristian Engen spent his final days in 1935

On January 16, 1923 Nora married George Erik Nelson, a first generation American, whose parents came to this country from Sweden. A year later, Christian and Ingeborg got their second batch on grandchildren. Edna was born on February 8, 1924, Leonard on May 16, 1926 and Vernon on Jul 14, 1928. Around January 13, 1930, Ingeborg became ill and a few days later on the Thursday, January 16th Ingeborg passed away in the evening. The funeral was held that following Tuesday from her

home. Rev. O. N. Nelson of Menahga conducted the last rites and she was laid to rest in the Lyons Cemetery.

On May 27, 1930 John Engen married Agnes Moench, a neighbor girl of about 17 years of age. Christian then moved in with him and stayed with John and Agnes for a little while. On July 18, 1930 Nora brought Darold into the world and later Geraldine Ruth on January 27, 1933. Christian later went to live with Nora and George. It is here that he became ill and went to Wesley's Hospital in Wadena on May 9, 1935 where he died that same day. They laid him to rest in the Lyons Township Cemetery next to his wife.