

The Simerson's by Oletta Wald, granddaughter

Frederick Molstad Simerson was born January 8, 1839 on the Molstad Gaard where his parents, Simon Hanson Faråsen and Alis Fredriksdaughter Erickson from Jentland had moved on October 12, 1833. He was baptized in the Veldre Church. When he was 27 years old, he married Pernille Larsdaughter Bratten who was born May 18, 1836. She was 30 years old. They were married in 1866 and in 1867 they left for the USA.

They boarded a sailing vessel. After 12 stormy weeks at sea, they landed on the east coast of America. They came on west as far as Trempealeau County, Wisconsin. They stayed here for two years and it was here that their first son was born, Simon, on August 15, 1868. In the early spring of 1869, in crudely built covered wagons, drawn by oxen, they and three other families from Norway (the C.B. Johnsons, Hans Hansons and C.M. Johnson) left that county. They traveled to La Crosse, crossed the Mississippi River and after eight long hard days of travel, arrived at their newly purchased land in the Belmond, Iowa township.

These four families lived in their covered wagons on the C.B. Johnson farm all summer while they hurriedly dug wells and built sheds and houses before winter set in. The Simerson's first home was a cave-like dug-out on a corner of their land. According to Grandfather Frederick, it was so comfortable that they lived in it for 8 years. After they had five of their six children, Grandmother Pernille moved into her first frame house in 1877, where her sixth child was born. They were farmers but Frederick preferred carpenter work, building many houses in Belmond and on the many farms in that area.

During the terrible diphtheria epidemic little Ole Simerson, age 2 years, died suddenly of the dread disease. According to the articles of the local newspaper, The Belmond Harold, they lost two more. The following are the articles:

April 13, 1881 -- Diphtheria again! Mr. and Mrs. Simerson, living west of Hickory Grove, lost a seven year old son Friday night from diphtheria. Little Johannes was sick only a short time. On Wednesday he had attended school. On Thursday he was taken sick and Friday night he died. The disease worked so rapidly that nothing could be done for him. Dr. Galer was summoned, but he could not help him. The afflicted parents have the sympathy of all.

April 27, 1881 -- Sad indeed! Again death has entered the home of Mr. and Mrs. Simerson of Belmond Township. Another of their children, a little girl, Ida, age 5 years, died of diphtheria. This is the third child that has been taken. Two others are very sick and may not live. The children are buried in the corner of the Simerson farm under a tall stately evergreen tree.

Of the marriage three children survived: Simon, who married Anna Johnson. They had four children: Ruth, Florence, Harold and Alvin. Ludvig who married Gena Schonhood. They were married only about three years when she died of cancer. Augusta who married Ole Wold. They had eight children.



Pernille Larsdatter Bratten and Frederick Simonsen Molstad

Simon Simerson

“Men who plant civilization in the wilderness, who organize back-woodsmen into communities, and throw around them the protection of the law, should not be forgotten. They render mankind a priceless service, and those who come after them and enjoy the fruits of their labor and their sacrifices should never tire in honoring their memory.” The parents of Simon Simerson were among the first to fell the trees of this county in order to make room for their crude dwellings, and since that time they and their children and grandchildren, have had much to do with the material prosperity of the county of which Simon Simerson is a large landowner. Simon Simerson was born on August 15, 1868, in Galesville, Wisconsin. His parents, who were natives of Norway, being Fred and Parnelia (Bratten) Simerson.

Coming from the farming district of Hamar,⁷ Norway, to this country 1867,⁸ these thrifty citizens of the north country located first in Wisconsin, but in the spring of 1869 they joined the first group of Norwegians coming to Wright county to establish homes of their own. They drove in rudely constructed wagons from La Crosse, Wisconsin, to a settlement five miles northwest of Belmond. In true pioneer fashion they proceeded to make themselves comfortable, converting their wagons into dwelling places, and thus did they live during the first summer. In the fall of 1869 they hauled logs which they cut from Burr Oak Grove, and of these, with such tools as they had, constructed a half dug-out house intended for temporary use. However, it proved so satisfactory for their simple, primitive life, that there they lived for eight years, until 1877, when they built a larger and more modern home. There the parents lived until 1893, when they decided to move to Belmond, which was their home until the mother's death in June, 1912, and the father returned to the farm with his son, Simon.

7 The Molsadt and Bratten farms, where Frederick and Pernille Simonsen were raised, were actually located in the Veldre parish which is located in Hedmark county. There are several local parishes that are closely associated in this locality, including: Veldre, Ringsaker, Brøttum, Vang, Furnes and Hamar.

8 Frederick and Pernille were married 23 April, 1867 in Veldre, Norway. Four days later on 27 April, 1867, they left their home and came to America.

Simon Simerson was one of six children, three of whom died in 1881, during an epidemic of diphtheria. Those who escaped this illness are Simon, Ludwig F., of Belmond, and Mrs. Augusta Wald, of Slater, Iowa. With the exception of two years when he lived in Texas, Simon Simerson has spent his entire life on the farm in section 4, adding to this in 1910, two hundred and forty acres in section 9, where he now lives. He is also the owner of the old home farm of three hundred and sixty acres in section 4, as well as of one hundred and sixty acres in section 3. This entire property, all in one body, is well improved, and on it he raises dairy stock and feeds cattle and hogs. The fine home, which was built in 1915 and has all modern conveniences, is situated in a beautiful grove of trees and is one of a group of well-painted, well-kept buildings.

The marriage of Simon Simerson and Anna N. Johnson took place on April 20, 1893, in Wright county, the bride being a daughter of Nels N. and Rachel (Dahlen) Johnson, natives of Norway, who came to the United States when children and settled in Minnesota, where Mrs. Simerson was born on March, 1867. A family of two boys and two girls have been born in the Simerson home. Ruth, the eldest, born on April 15, 1894, is a graduate of the Belmond high school and a teacher in the local schools. Florence, who was born on August 26, 1896, is also a high school graduate and has taught in the school in the vicinity of her home: she is a student at St. Olaf's College, Northfield, Minnesota. Harold, born on September 23, 1900, is a high school student, and Alvin, the youngest, was born on May 17, 1908, in Kingsville county, Texas.

Mr. and Mrs. Simerson and their family are devout members of the Norwegian Lutheran church, and have given liberally both of time and means toward its support, welfare and success.

It may be said with truth that the career of Simon Simerson is of the type that commands respect and admiration. Mr. Simerson is a man of good judgement, of practical intelligence, and of strong personality. He stands high in the community which his family helped to build up, and where he has lived long enough for his worth to be tried and his good qualities to be appreciated.⁹

9 History of Wright County, Iowa : its people, industries and institutions with biographical sketches of representative citizens and genealogical records of many of the old families; edited by B. P. Birdsall; FHL film # 989443 Item 3.

