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Looking back: The Rev. Christian Saugstad

Sandra Lawrence WAHS

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The Rev. Christian Saugstad and his wife, Randine Johnson Kvernstuen.

Angie Cina

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Sitting above the eastern bank of Lake Mjosa, south of the Ringsaker the Saugstad farm. Documents date the farm at least as far back as 1390. By the time Tollef Olsen was born in 1792, the farm had been divided into East Saugstad and West Saugstad. Tollef's parents, Ole Tollefsen and Marte Michelsdatter (Krogvig) were farming vestre (west) Saugstad. Ole had inherited the farm from his father, who had inherited the farm from his father.

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According to family legend, Tollef, as the first son, should have been the heir to the farm. But Marte wanted the second son, Mikkel, who was named after her father to be the heir. Whether the legend is true cannot be verified, but Mikkel's descendants remain on the farm to this day.

Tollef married Kjersti Johannesdatter in 1822 and they settled on her father's farm, Lille Aarsrud. They had seven children in Norway: Marthe, Ole, Johanne, Even, Christian, Lars, Eli, and Lise. In 1847, Lars died at 5 years of age.

Tollef's family began to emigrate from Norway in 1846. First, their daughter, Marthe, and her husband, Lars Christoffersen, along with their oneyearold daughter Marie. They emigrated at the same time as Even Gullord and Peder Brynstad onboard the Bowditch.

In 1850 Tollef emigrated from Lille Aarsrud on the Sjofna. Settling in Coon Prairie, he purchased 40 acres in section 26. The next year, Kjersti left Ringsaker with 12-year-old Christian, 6-year-old Eli, and 3-year-old Lisa. Their son, Even, arrived in Coon Prairie in 1853. Initially using the Olsen surname, the family eventually chose the name from the family farm, Saugstad, as their surname. On Aug. 1, 1852, Kjersti gave birth to her ninth child, Thalli Christine in Coon Prairie.

Christian must have remained in Norway, for he did not emigrate until 1854 when, at the age of 16, he arrived in Quebec, Canada. From there he traveled to Milwaukee where his money gave out. From one account, "Being short of funds, he was left alone on the pier among strangers with only ten cents in his pocket." For the next three months he worked, earning enough money to complete his journey to Coon Prairie arriving three days before the death of his mother.

Christian married Randine Johnson Kvernstuen on Jan. 19, 1861, in Coon Prairie, Minn. **Looking back: The Rev. Christian Saugstad** SHARE THIS 0 comments
Randine was the seventh child of John Larsen Kvernstuen and Ingeborg Pedersen Gullord. She was born in 1837 on the western side of Lake Mjosa in Biri, Norway.

Initially Christian and Randine settled in Coon Prairie where five children were born: Ida Christine, Torvald, Martha, Olaf, and Johannes. Christian attended Augustana College in Paton from 1867–1869. In 1869, he entered Augsburg Lutheran Seminary in Marshall, Wis. He was ordained at Trinity Church in Minneapolis on Aug. 9, 1872.

During his seminary training, Christian was called to serve the Trysil congregation in Holmes City, Douglas County, Minn. He accepted and for his \$100 salary he taught school and preached God’s word every Sunday. His responsibility included 16 congregations extending from the east line of Stearns County to Big Stone Lake and approximately 60 miles north and south. In addition, he visited many congregations in the Red River Valley.

Randine and the children moved to Holmes City with Christian in 1872. From the Trysil Historielag website, “Rev. Saugstad helped the parish through its early steps and was part of the fabric of the community along with his wife.” Four children were born in Holmes City: Theodor, Ragna Louise, Christian Randolph, and Victoria. Theodor was the first recorded burial for the Trysil Cemetery buried just two days after his birth in 1874.

Services were in the schoolhouse until the church was built and dedicated in August 1875. Described as a very joyful day, visiting pastors and people from all the neighboring congregations filled the church until “the church could not seat them all but the weather was pleasant and the people sat on the church lawn and listened to the word of God through the windows. Dinner was served in a lean to by the church.”

Randine died on April 28, 1877, during the birth of the twins, Victoria and Christian Randolph. Baby Victoria also died that day. They are both interred by Theodor in Trysil-Bethseda Lutheran Cemetery, Holmes City township, Douglas County, Minn.

The photos of Christian and Randine are courtesy of the Trysil Historielag
County, Minn., **www.trysilhistorielag.com** and the Douglas County, Minn.
Historical Society.

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Join us next week for part 2 of the Rev. Christian Saugstad's story.