



Fall 2021

MURRAY COUNTY CEMETERY TOUR

Created by the Murray County Historical Society

Sillerud Lutheran Cemetery



L. A. Hocanson.
Sillerud Church Diamond
Jubilee Booklet.

During the 1860s to the 1870s a cluster of Swedish settlers had formed in the northwest corner of Murray County. In 1873, a Lutheran Missionary by the name of Rev. Lars August Hocanson learned of this group and met with them to encourage them to form a Lutheran congregation. On April 27, 1873, the Evangelical Lutheran Sillerud Church organized at the Nels and Kjersti Miller sod home in Skandia Twp.

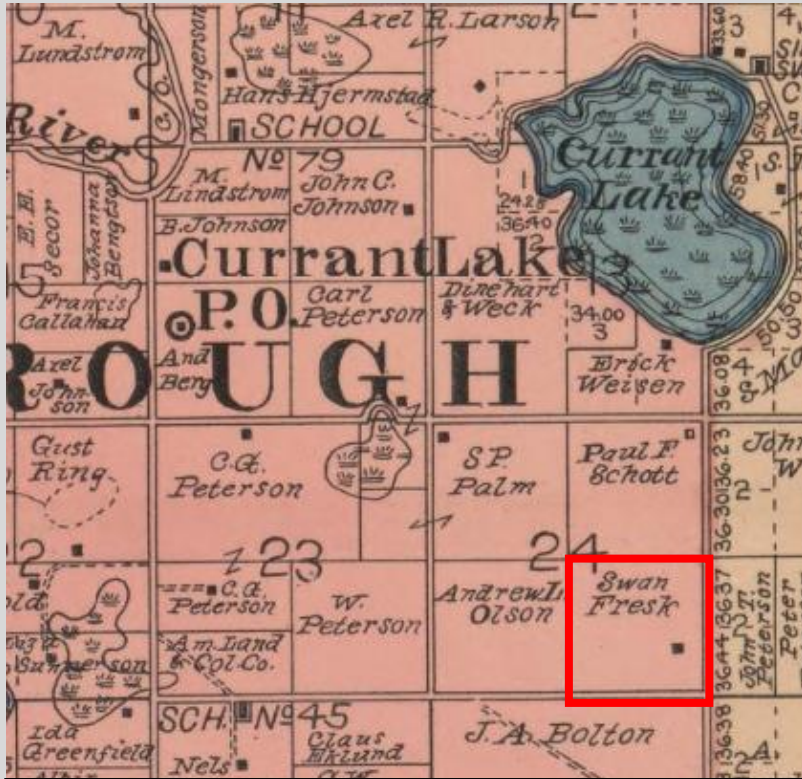
For the first five years, church services were held in the homes of members or at the District 8 School House. In 1878 the congregation purchased land on the northeast shore of Current Lake to build a church and a cemetery. The first church was a 16 x 26 structure. Eleven years later the current church building was constructed in 1889. There have been several additions and renovations to this building over the years.

Church services were held in Swedish for many years. It is thought that they were switched to English between 1921 and 1923 when the Confirmation Classes we also changed to English. Today, 148 years after its start, the Sillerud Lutheran Church continues to hold Sunday services each week.

Sillerud Lutheran Cemetery (Continued)



Sven and John Frisk



Frisk family farm in Ellsborough Township.

Buried here are Sven (Swan) and John Frisk, father and son who made their home here in northwest Murray County in the 1890s.

Sven was married to Anna Frisk. The couple's family grew as they welcomed four sons and two daughters into the world: Olaf, John, Johnas, Harlow, Anne (Olson), and Carrie.

The Frisk family had lived in several locations over the years including Stockholm, Wisconsin and Pierre, South Dakota. In 1894 the Frisks settled in Ellsborough Township south of Current Lake.

Sven and John Frisk (Continued)



Sven Frisk Stone.

Before moving to Murray County, the Frisk family had lost two of their sons in accidents, Johnas and Harlow. One died in an accident with a horse and the other was struck by a train. With these loses already weighing on the family, tragedy struck again in late July of 1895.

Sven had traveled the short distance to Balaton where he purchased a load of wood at the Wilhelm Brothers Wood Yard. Several logs rolled off of the pile and spooked his young horses. While Sven was trying to calm the horses, he was kicked in the chest, breaking his ribs, and killing him almost instantly. Sven was buried here in Sillerud and the rest of his family, except for Anne who had married a local man, moved back to South Dakota.

Sven and John Frisk (Continued)



Teddy Roosevelt and the
“Rough Riders” fought during
the Spanish American War.
Image from Wikipedia.com

At the age of 22, John Frisk volunteered to serve in the Spanish American War. He was assigned to the 1st Infantry Regiment of the South Dakota Volunteers and worked as a “wagoner,” a person who transports supplies by wagon.

The Spanish American War began on April 21, 1898. At this time, America was a trading ally of Cuba. Cuba, which was a colony of Spain, wanted independence. The Philippines were also calling for freedom from Spanish rule at the same time. President William McKinley sent a war ship, the USS Maine, to Havana Harbor in 1898 to protect American interests in Cuba. With the mysterious explosion and sinking of the USS Maine, America declared war on Spain. The war lasted roughly 3 months ending with Spain relinquishing control of Cuba and the Philippines. American troops remained in these areas after the war was declared over.

Sven and John Frisk (Continued)



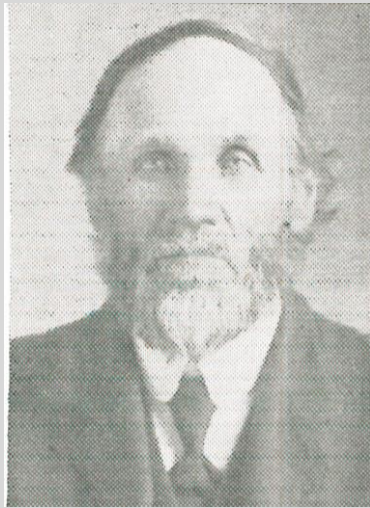
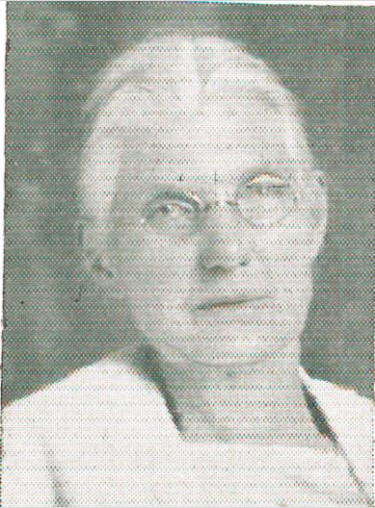
John Frisk Stone.

Over the course of the fighting, about 380 Americans lost their lives in combat; however, over 5,000 additional soldiers died from illnesses such as Typhoid and Yellow Fever.

John Frisk was discharged from the military on October 5, 1898, as he had contracted "tropical fever." When John returned to the United States, he continued living near his family in South Dakota. On September 30, 1901, John passed away at the age of 25. His obituary lists complications from tropical fever as the cause of his death. John was transported from South Dakota back to Murray County to be buried here next to his father.

Note the image of the closed book on top of Sven's grave marker. In this case the closed book may symbolizes the end of life, the story of Sven Frisk had been told and the end of his story had come.

Andrew and Casja Lundberg



Casja and Andrew Lundberg.
Sillerud Church Diamond Jubilee Booklet.

Andrew Lundberg was born in Lund, Sweden on August 24, 1845. At the age of 23, he immigrated to America making his way to St. Peter, Minnesota. Andrew worked in several trades in St. Peter while he was getting used to life in America. During this time is when he met Casja Johnson. Casja (also known as Katherine) was born in Varmland, Sweden on June 29, 1851. The Johnson family immigrated to America when she was a young child.

On December 28, 1872, Andrew and Casja were married. Two years after their marriage, the young couple moved to Murray County, where they homesteaded in the far northwest corner of Ellsborough Township.

Andrew and Casja Lundberg (Continued)

Over the years, the Lundbergs welcome eleven children into their family, 8 girls and 3 boys. All but one daughter, Anna, lived to adulthood.

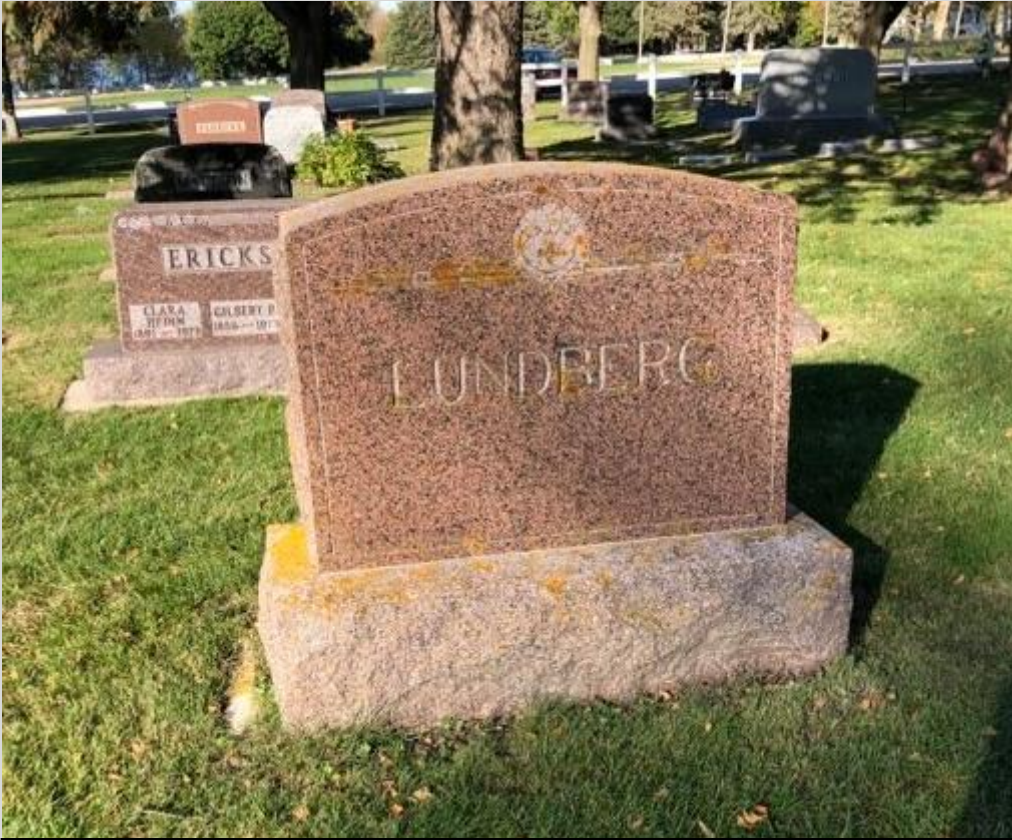
The Lundberg family lived through all the hardships of early settlers in Murray county: the grasshopper years, the harsh winter of 1880-1881, and more. After a lifetime of farming, Andrew and Casja retired to Ruthton, leaving the farm to their sons.

Andrew was a very faithful man. He served as a deacon at the Sillerud Lutheran Church for 30 years, was the Sunday School Superintendent for 8 years, and rarely missed a church service in his life. In his obituary published in the Balaton Press Tribune on December 23, 1926, it was noted that "countless the times we have seen him come across the prairies, walking seven miles to attend church in weather that might have frightened the most fearless of souls."



Lundberg farm. Sillerud
Church about 7 miles away
from the Lundbergs.

Andrew and Casja Lundberg (Continued)



Lundberg Family Stone.

The Lundberg family were kind neighbors who were always willing to lend a hand to those in need. Another line from Andrew's obituary noted that "No one, friend or stranger, ever lacked a welcome in the wholesome and hospitable Lundberg home."

At the age of 81, Andrew passed away on December 9, 1926. Three years later Casja passed away on September 12, 1929, after being confined to her bed for 10 days from ill health.

Nels and Kjersti Miller



Nels and Kjersti Miller. *Murray County Minnesota*, history book.

Nels Miller was born on October 21, 1842, in Vosjo Claster, Sweden. At the age of 27 he left Sweden and his fiancé, Kjersti Nelson, to start a new life in America. Nels worked for the railroad, earning enough money to bring Kjersti to America and to purchase land. Once Kjersti joined him, they were married in June of 1872 at St. Peter, Minnesota.

The Millers moved to Skandia Township. They enjoyed living in Minnesota; however, they missed the church services they had attended in Sweden. At a meeting held in the Miller's sod house on April 27, 1873, a group of Swedish Lutherans neighbors came together to create the Evangelical Lutheran Sillerud Church.

Nels and Kjersti Miller (Continued)

The young couple welcomed 8 children into their family while living in Skandia Township, six sons and two daughters: John, Hilding, Anton, August, Fred, Herman, Ellen (Skoug), and Mary (Anderson).

On May 5, 1891, Nels passed away at the age of 49 after suffering with pneumonia for a week. Kjersti was left to raise their eight young children on her own. Her older sons were a great help; however, their oldest son was only 17 at the time of Nels' death.

Kjersti lived for 38 years after Nels' death. She was a strong, independent, and brave woman who lived to the age of 83, passing away on March 13, 1929.

DIED.

MILLER:—At his home in Skandia township, this county, on Wednesday, May 20, of pneumonia, **Nels Miller**, in his 49th year. Mr. Miller was born in Sweden in Septem-

The Slayton Gazette.
May 28, 1891.

Nels and Kjersti Miller (Continued)



Miller Family Stone.

Her obituary published in the March 29, 1929 edition of the Balaton Press Tribune gave a heartfelt tribute to her life. It stated that: "No difficulties were too great for her, no disappointments turned her away from her goal; cheerful, optimistic, generous, hopeful, thankful, hospitable, she was a lone woman won out where many a pioneering man failed."

Her obituary closed with this tear-jerking line: "As the sun was sinking in the west, thirty-eight years after her husband's death, Mrs. Miller was laid to rest by his side in the cemetery that they helped establish. Here they will await the final resurrection, when, as we firmly believe, they will be together to part no more."

Carl Gustaf Norström



Mr. and Mrs. Norström.
Sillerud Church Diamond Jubilee Booklet.

Carl Gustaf Norström was born October 12, 1857, in Sweden. At the age of 15, Norström immigrated to America with his parents where they settled in eastern Minnesota. He attended Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. The school was founded to provide pastors and teachers for Swedish immigrants settling in Minnesota. Carl then attended a theological school in Rock Island, Illinois. In 1885, he was ordained as a Lutheran minister.

Norström came to Murray County with his wife, Christina, and newborn son to serve as the minister of the Sillerud Lutheran Church from 1889 to 1892. He was also the pastor at the Bethany Lutheran Church in Mason Township and the Elim Lutheran Church North of Lake Benton.

Carl Gustaf Norström (Continued)

C. G. NORSTROM has worked faithfully the past two years to raise the standard of the schools of this county. This he has done in a manner not readily seen or understood by the casual observer. He has paid especial attention to raising the standard of qualification of the teachers. The surest way to have good schools is to have good teachers. Having good teachers there is not so much need of visiting the schools so often. Mr. Norstrom has succeeded in raising the grade of teachers and in so doing he has raised the teachers' wages and of course the general standard of the schools. In refusing certificates to unqualified persons he has, of course, made enemies. He deserves a second term.

Norstrom for reelection article.

The Slayton Gazette.

November 3, 1892.

During his pastorate, the new (current) Sillerud church building was being constructed. Along with overseeing this project, Norström was also instrumental in strengthening the Young People's Society.

In 1890, Norström was elected Murray County Superintendent of Schools. He served in this position from 1890 to 1892. County superintendents were responsible for overseeing all schools in a county. The superintendent was required to visit every school in the county at least once each term, organize and conduct workshops for teachers, advise teachers and school boards, and approve any plans for building or improving school buildings.

Carl Gustaf Norström (Continued)



Norström can be seen standing on the church steps, not far from where he is buried today. To the right is the original church building.
Sillerud Church Diamond Jubilee Booklet.

Norström enjoyed this position and was planning to run for reelection in 1892. Tragedy struck before the election. There are two stories that were uncovered during research for this cemetery tour describing what caused Norström's death. 1) according to his obituary published in The Slayton Gazette, his "death was caused by an attack of brain fever caused by overwork and the worry of the campaign [for reelection]." 2) The Sillerud Lutheran Church 125th Anniversary booklet reported that he died due to injuries sustained in a horse-riding accident.

Carl Gustaf Norström (Continued)



Norström's Stone.

Whether it was brain fever or injury from an accident, Norström passed away on November 5, 1892, at the young age of 34. Norström left behind his wife and three young children. His youngest child, Carl Emmanuel, Jr. was born an hour before his death on November 5.

Norström was buried here, close to the door of the church he oversaw being built. His wife, Christina and her three children, Mauritz, Irene, and Carl, Jr. moved back east to Wabasha County. She never remarried and died in July of 1925. She is buried near Lake City, MN.

Henry and Katherine Purrier



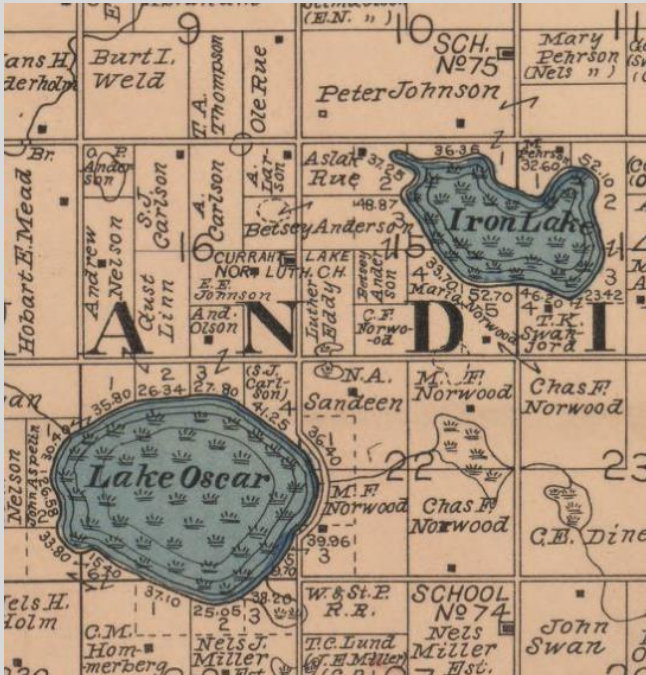
Painting depicting the Civil War Battle of Chickamauga. Photo from Wikipedia.com.

Henry and Katherine Purrier were the first white settlers to take up a homestead in Skandia Township, Murray County. The Purriers were French Canadians who practiced the Roman Catholic faith. To our knowledge, they are the only Catholics buried here in the Sillerud Lutheran Cemetery.

Henry was born on September 15, 1819, near Quebec, Canada. In his early forties, Henry enlisted in the United States Army on December 7, 1861. He served in Company 1 of the 1st Engineers Regiment from New York. Purrier was discharged on July 19, 1865.

At some point after being discharged from the military, Henry and his wife, Katherine, moved to Mankato Minnesota. At this point, the Purrier family had grown to include seven children: Abe, Selinda, Angeline, Edward, Horace, Ida, and Cora. The Purrier family, minus Abe and Selinda who had already married and started their own families, moved to Skandia Township in 1869. They settled on the south bank of Iron Lake where they built a dugout.

Henry and Katherine Purrier (Continued)



The Purrier's farm was located south of Iron Lake.

Local Historian Mary Lindsey wrote down many of her memories from growing up in Skandia Township. She mentioned the Purriers several times, including how Henry was a wild storyteller. One story told by Henry is as follows:

“One morning I had my wheat loaded to take into Camden to mill (the Camden State Park is there now) and hitched up my mules to take it. When I loaded my grist at the mill, I saw a black cloud in the northwest threatening rain. I said to myself ‘if I can only get to the top of that steep hill before rain begins, I can surely reach home without my grist getting wet.’ When I got to the top I looked back and saw the rain pouring in the valley. I whipped my mules, but before I got going good the rain was pelting away at my end gate. But I kept going and kept ahead of the rain.... When I reached the foot of the hill near home, I whistled for Ed to open the shed door. So, I drove right in and never got a drop of rain on my grist.”

Henry and Katherine Purrier (Continued)



Purrier Family Stone.

The first school in Skandia Township was held at the Purrier sod home. A young woman, Myra Manchester, was hired to teach the neighboring children how to read and write in English. Mary Lindsey recalls that the Purrier family was a great help to their Swedish neighbors in learning English.

Henry died at the age of 62 on March 2, 1881, at his son Edward's home in Lowville Township. Katherine passed away the following year in 1882. The cause of their deaths was not uncovered over the course of this research. Most of the Purrier children moved back to the Mankato area after Katherine's death.

The Purrier grave marker stands as a testament to the first white settlers in Skandia Township. In life, the Purriers were lone Catholics surrounded by Swedish Lutheran neighbors. Though they practiced different religions, we speculate that the deep friendship they had with their neighbors explains their inclusion here in Sillerud Lutheran Cemetery.

Skandia Free Cemetery

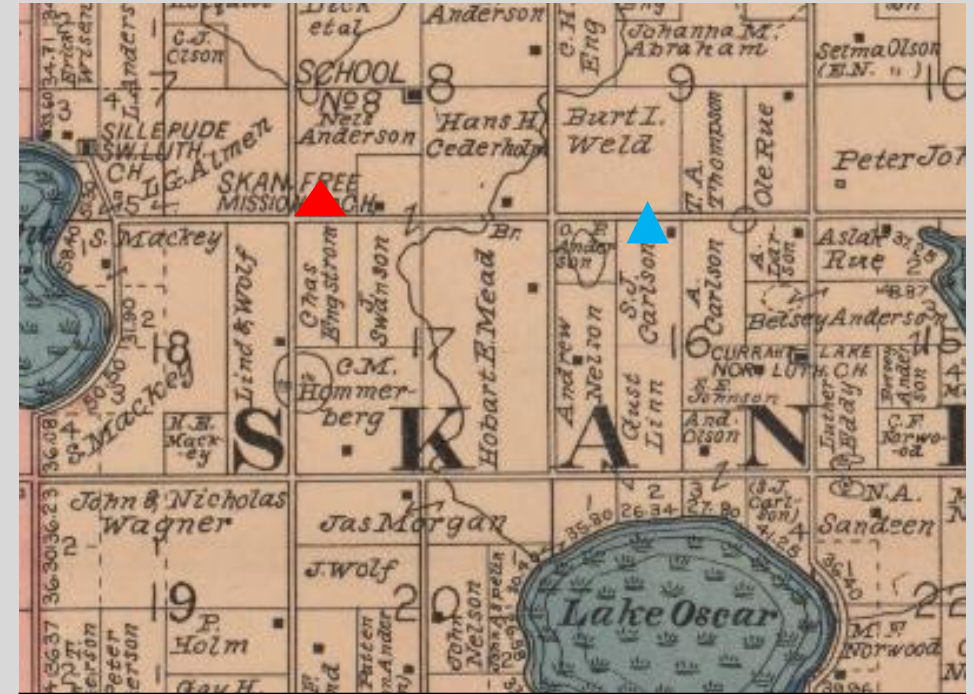


A meeting held at the Austin Rue home on March 15, 1897, led to the creation of the Scandinavian Free Mission, later reorganized and renamed the Skandia Evangelical Free Church. The original idea was to build the congregation's church here on this land once owned by S. John Carlson. For an undocumented reason, the church was constructed a couple of miles away on the Nels Anderson land. This original plot was then used as the church cemetery. In the summer of 1897, the church building was constructed, measuring 24' x 36' x 12'. Reverend Fred Elmer was the first pastor to serve in the church. The Skandia Evangelical Free Church continues to operate today, over 120 years after its creation.

Skandia Free Cemetery Continued

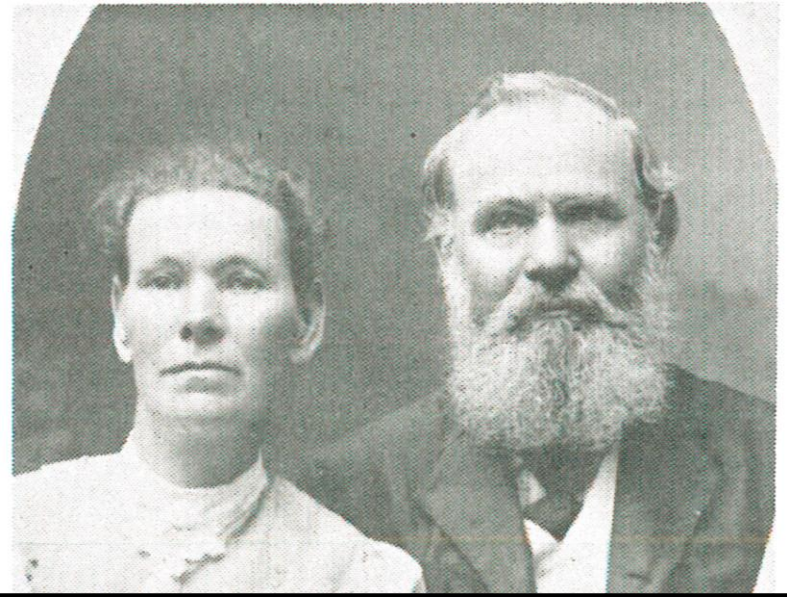


Skandia Church and Congregation, 1905.
Skandia Church Diamond Jubilee Booklet.



Location of the [Church](#) and [Cemetery](#).

Nels and Gustava Anderson



Gustava and Nels Anderson.
Balaton Centennial Book.

Nels Anderson was born in Sweden on August 13, 1846. At the age of 27 Nels left his native land and sailed to America. Nels was one of the first settlers in Skandia Township. He settled on the southwest quarter of section 8. For the next seven years Nels spent much of his time in northern Minnesota near Hibbing and Duluth. Seven years after coming to America, Nels sailed back to Sweden to bring the woman he loved and had left behind, Gustava (maiden name unknown), back with him to their established homestead in America.

There is a story recorded at the Murray County Museum that recalls Gustava's first time coming to the homestead. It stated that she looked unsuccessfully for the house but that she was standing right on top of it as it was a dugout!

Nels and Gustava Anderson (Continued)



Anderson Family Stone.



Nels and Gustava used oxen and a cart to haul logs from the Bear Lake Woods to Skandia Township in order to build a small cabin. Eventually they were able to build a frame house. The couple raised eleven children, three boys and eight girls.

Nels was said to be very talented at carving and hand crafting home goods including wooden spoons and an eggbeater he made out of willow branches. Gustava brought a spinning wheel with her from Sweden. She would spin by candlelight and turn the thread into mittens, hats, sweaters, and other clothing for their large family.

Nels and Gustava Anderson (Continued)



In her later years, Gustava was called "Grandma Anderson" by many of the children at the Skandia Free Church. Skandia Church Diamond Jubilee Booklet.



The church clock Gustava wound while the Skandia Church was closed. Skandia Church Diamond Jubilee Booklet.

In 1897, the Andersons donated the land where the Skandia Free church was built. There was a period of time when the membership of the church became so low that regular services were no longer held. During this time, 1924-1930, Gustava was said to have gone to the church once a week to wind the church clock and to pray that services would one day resume.

At the age of 81, Nels passed away on February 14, 1927. Gustava lived another 14 years, passing away at the age of 84 on April 3, 1941.

Berndt and Lydia Bengtson



Bernt and Lydia Bengtson.
Murray County Minnesota, history book.

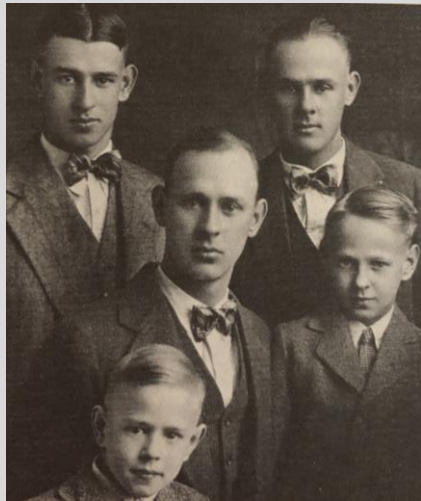
On December 7, 1882, Bengt and Maria Bengtson of Smoland, Sweden welcomed a new addition to their family, a baby boy they named Berndt. As a young man Berndt worked in Dia, Sweden at a sawmill and in a woodworking shop.

At the young age of 11 Berndt immigrated to America and made his way to Sycamore, Illinois where two of his uncles had settled a couple of years earlier. For three years, Berndt worked as a farm laborer. It was during this time her learned to speak English.

Berndt and Lydia Bengtson (Continued)



Bengtson
Daughters.
*Murray
County
Minnesota,
history book.*



Bengtson
Sons. *Murray
County
Minnesota,
history book.*

In 1896, Berndt relocated to Minnesota with his uncle John Mattson. At first, he purchased land in the SW Quarter of Section 29, Skandia Township. In 1902 he sold that land to his cousin and relocated to the NW Quarter of Section 8, Skandia Township where he built a one room house and a barn.

In 1904, Berndt married his neighbor Lydia Anderson (whose parents Nels and Gustava are also highlighted on this cemetery tour). Lydia and Berndt built a frame home on their property. Over the course of their marriage, they had eleven children: Erland, Lyman, Florence, Merrill, Lillian, Adeline, Viola, LeRoy, Floyd, and Vivian, and one son who died in infancy.

Berndt and Lydia Bengtson (Continued)



Bengtson Family Stone.

In 1927, the Bengtson family expanded their farmland by purchasing the west half of the northwest quarter of section 17, Skandia Township. One year later, Berndt passed away in 1928. Lydia was left to raise a family of small children. With the help of her older sons, they continued to keep the farm running until 1956 when she passed away in her home at the age of 69. After her death, Erland and Lyman purchased and ran the original farm in section 8 and LeRoy purchased and ran the farm in Section 17.

Nels and Ella Johnson



John B. Johnson Farm, Skandia Township
where Nels grew to adulthood.
Trace Hafner Collection.

Nels Magnus was born in Sweden on December 19, 1875, to John and Boel (Pronounced "Bell") Johnson. At the age of 2, Nels' family, including his parents and two sisters Hanna and Annie, immigrated to America where they came directly to Skandia Township.

The family stayed with Hans Pearson and then spent their first winter in America on the Nels Anderson farm. The following spring the family moved to a rented farm until they were able to purchase land of their own. Nels grew to adulthood on the Johnson farm in Skandia township. He was the only brother to seven sisters.

Nels and Ella Johnson (Continued)



Nels' seven sister and wife Ella. Left row, top down: Ida, Hannah, Agnes, Emily. Right row: Hulda Annie, Ella, and Lydia.
Trace Hafner Collection.

Ella Swanson was born on January 28, 1880, in Tiskilwa, Illinois. In 1896, the Swanson family moved to Murray County, first to Chandler and then to the Slayton area.

On October 28, 1899, Nels and Ella were married. They welcomed nine children into their family over the course of their marriage: Raymond, Gladys (Swanson), Arnold, Bernice (Baker), Ora (Blowdel), Vera, Curtis, Clare, and Howard. Clare and Howard died in childhood and are buried in this cemetery near their parents.

Nels and Ella Johnson (Continued)

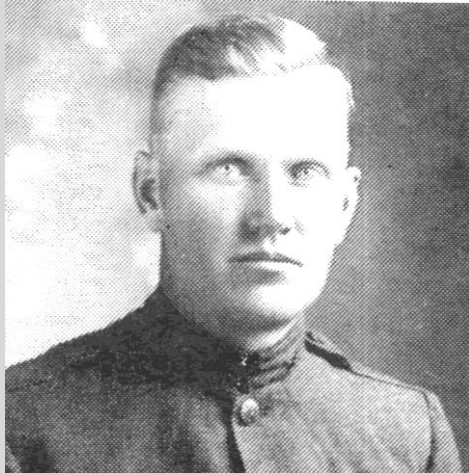


Nels and Ella Johnson Stones.

Nels and Ella farmed in Skandia Township for their entire lives. Nels was particularly interested in livestock and kept a stock of purebred cattle.

After suffering from failing health for four years, Nels passed away in the Tracy Hospital on May 22, 1942, at the age of 66. Following Nels' death, Ella moved to Tracy and then Balaton. 31 years after her husband's death, She passed away at Christian Manor in Tracy on July 30, 1973.

Floyd and Dora Mattson



Floyd Mattson in
his Military
Uniform. Circa
1918 or 1919.
Balaton
Centennial Book.



Dora Mattson.
Balaton
Centennial Book

Floyd was born in Sycamore, Illinois to John and Ellen Mattson on April 24, 1889. At the age of nine, his family including parents and seven siblings moved to Murray County.

In 1918, Floyd was drafted into the United States Army serving in the 307th Infantry primarily in France until May 1919. Floyd was a member of the famous "Lost Battalion." This name was given to the nine companies of the 77th Division, consisting of roughly 554 men. The Lost Battalion, moved to attack German forces in the Argonne Forest in France. Unbeknownst to their leaders, the units to their left and right were stalled, leaving them alone and surrounded by German troops. After six days in the forest, 197 were killed in action, 150 were missing or taken prisoner, and only 194 men walked away from the fight alive and free.

Floyd and Dora Mattson (Continued)



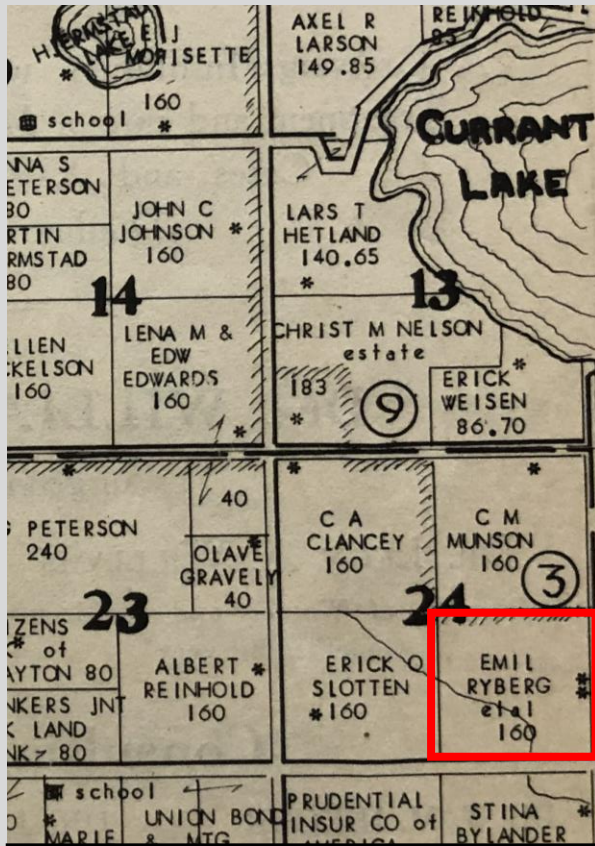
Mattson Family Stone.

Dora Anna Sophie Bylander was born on October 22, 1896, to Nels and Stina (Olson) Bylander in Sutherland, Nebraska. Her family moved to Reading, Minnesota in 1904 and then moved once more in 1906 to Murray County.

Floyd and Dora were married on January 10, 1924, in Lake Wilson. Over the course of their marriage the couple welcomed five children into their family: Eleanor (Nelson), Alden, Einer, Marvin, and Evadence (Keena).

Floyd and Dora farmed in Ellsborough Township from 1926 to 1957 at which time their youngest son, Marvin, purchased the farm. 13 years after retiring from farming, Floyd passed away on April 11, 1970. Another 13 years later, Dora passed away at the Colonial Manor Nursing Home in Balaton on May 30, 1983.

Andrew and Ingrid Ryberg



Ryberg Farm in Ellsborough Township. Emil farmed the land after his parents.

Not a great deal of recorded history was found on the Ryberg family while researching for the cemetery tour. They were chosen particularly for their beautiful stone adorned with a Swedish scripture and symbolism.

Andrew and Ingrid Ryberg immigrated in 1880 to Chicago from Sweden. From Chicago they made their way to Ellsborough Township around the year 1900 with their four oldest children. The couple welcomed a total of six children into their family over the course of their marriage: Ernest, Emil, Emily (Johnson), Edward, Hilda (Gregerson), Selma (Duncan), Arthur, and Theodore.

On June 12, 1912, Ingrid passed away at the age of 30. On August 20th, Andrew wrote a new last will and testament providing for his children. Less than three months later, Andrew died on November 2, 1912. The cause of their deaths was not able to be uncovered. What caused Ingrid's death at the young age of 30? Did Andrew die of a "broken heart" or an unrelated reason?

Andrew and Ingrid Ryberg (Continued)



Ryberg Family Stone.

The unique stone marking the Ryberg's grave attracted us to research the family. On the right side of the stone is the image of a broken column. This image symbolizes a life cut short. Considering Ingrid passed away at the age of 30, this symbol fits with their story.

The scripture written on the stone is in Swedish. It roughly translates to:

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.”

Revelation 14:13

Zion Lutheran Cemetery



In the summer of 1876, Rasmus Egeland, a missionary, visited Skandia Township. He was convinced by the Lutheran population to stay in the area and start a church. On September 24, 1876, a meeting at Henrik Moline's home ended with the organization of the Current Lake Evangelisk Luthersk Menighed.

Two acres of land was purchased from Ever Johnson for \$12.00 in 1886 to be used as a cemetery. For the first 11 years, the congregation met in the homes of parishioners before the church building was constructed here on the cemetery grounds.

When talks began about closing the church, a Cemetery Association was stated on September 24, 1972, exactly 96 years after the congregation began. The Zion Lutheran Church celebrated its last church service in 1991. Today, the cemetery association remains active taking care of the grounds and the graves of past congregation members.

Ole and Turi Aleckson



Telemark, Norway.
Image from Wikipedia.com.

Ole Aleckson and Turi Swanjord were married on March 29, 1869, in Upper Telemark, Norway. Two months after their marriage, they immigrated to America. From the east coast they traveled by boat up the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In the spring of 1870, they moved to Nicollet County where Ole worked as a carpenter for seven years. In 1877 the Alecksons moved to Skandia Township.

Ole was a skilled carpenter, cabinet maker, and blacksmith. Because of his skills, he was often called on to help his neighbors with projects.

Turi was a talented seamstress, spinner, and weaver. She had one of the first sewing machines in the area. She was kept busying making clothes for her own family and for neighbors. A story recorded at the Murray County museum stated that Turi missed the sound of church bells she had grown up with in Norway. Determined to hear that sound out here on the Minnesota prairie, Turi raised the money herself to purchase a bell for the Zion Lutheran Church.

Ole and Turi Aleckson (Continued)



Aleckson Family, 1889.
Murray County Minnesota, history book.

Ole and Turi welcomed six children into the world during their marriage. Alec was born in Wisconsin in 1870. He farmed in Skandia township his entire life until his death in 1937.

Mary was born in Nicollet County in 1871. She became a teacher and is reported to be the first high school graduate from Murray County. Mary married Frank Lindsey in 1898. She was an amazing local historian – many of her writings have helped researchers at the Murray County Museum over the years.

Annie was born in 1874 in St. Peter. She became a schoolteacher and married George Mumby in 1907. Annie and George lived many years on the Aleckson homestead.

Ole and Turi Aleckson (Continued)



Lena was born on the Skandia homestead in 1882. Like her sisters, she also became a schoolteacher and later married James Larson in 1921.

Between Annie and Lena, two more daughters were born on the homestead, Emilie and Elizabeth. Both of these sisters died in early childhood.



Ole and Turi's Stones.

Besides Mary who is buried in the Slayton North Cemetery, the entire Aleckson family is buried here in the Zion Lutheran Cemetery.

Aspelin Family



Front Row: Christine, Julius.
Back Row: Rudy, Esther, John, Gladys, and Clair.

Murray County Minnesota, history book.

Buried in this row are three members of the Aspelin family: Julius, Christine, and Charles.

Julius Aspelin was born December 21, 1872, in New Ulm, Minnesota to John and Anna Aspelin. In 1873, the Aspelin family moved to Skandia Township on the shore of Rush Lake.

After coming to Murray County, John and Anna had three more children, Karl, who died in infancy, Charley, and a daughter who died along with Anna in childbirth. Anna and the baby girl are buried in the Sillerud Cemetery. A story recorded at the Murray County Museum states that Julius would often say losing his mother at a young age was the worst tragedy that ever happened to him.

Aspelin Family (Continued)



Aspelin Family Stone.

When he was 30 years old, Julius married 25-year-old Christine Guttebo of Decorach, Iowa on March 18, 1902. During that time, they welcomed five children into their family: John, Rudolph, Clair, Gladys (Larson), and Esther (Olafson).

Julius and Christine farmed in Skandia from 1902 until 1946. At that time, they retired and moved in with one of their daughters near Currie. Their oldest son, John, took over the farm from 1946 until 1950 when it was sold out of the family. Julius passed away at his daughter's home on May 11, 1957. Twelve years later, Christine passed away in the Slayton Memorial Hospital on April 6, 1969.

Aspelin Family (Continued)



Charley Aspelin's Stone.

Charles, "Charley," Rudolph Aspelin was born in Skandia Township on April 20, 1877. Charley lived in the Bear Lake Woods for most of his life.

He was a skilled hunter and trapper and as one story goes, he and his brother Julius trapped 30,000 rats in Bear Lake in just one winter (possibly a hyperbole). Charley passed away at the Durgan Rest Home in Hadley on November 16, 1954.

Christian and Olena Eng



Christian Eng, 1910.
Zion Church 75th
Anniversary Book.

Christian Eng and Olena Olsdatter were married at Skiptredt, Parish, Norway in 1863. Nine years later, the Eng family along with their four oldest children, Olaus, Hans, John, and Lena, immigrated from Oslo Norway in 1872. Like many other Norwegian Immigrants who ended up settling in Skandia Township, the Eng family first came to Nicolette County, Minnesota before coming to Skandia in 1874.

After coming to America, the Eng family welcomed four more children into their family, Ole, Emma, Edward, and Ludwig. A story recorded in the Murray County Museum explained that the Eng family lived through the "grasshopper days." This was a time when grasshoppers, or locust, wreaked havoc on area farmers. During this time, it was said that the Eng family lived mostly off milk and milk products as most of their crops had been destroyed.

Christian and Olena Eng (Continued)

Back in Norway Christian was employed as a tinsmith. He used his knowledge of metals to do many repairs on his farm equipment himself. The following article relates when Christian was hurt on the farm. This article helps to bring life to this man who passed away so many years ago – he was a real person, not just a marker in a cemetery.

Christian Eng broke his little finger while replacing a belt on a machine. Dr. Lowe, of Slayton, rendered the necessary surgical aid.

The Slayton Gazette. August 30, 1894.

Christian and Olena Eng (Continued)



Eng Family Stone.

Christian and Olena's son, John, is also buried here in the Zion Lutheran Cemetery. In 1901 John married Ingeborg Swanjord. Seven years later, they purchased the homestead from his parents and continued farming the land until retiring in 1938. John was active in Farmer's Co-operative Shipping Association, Co-operative Elevator, and the Co-operative Creamery, all of Balaton. He supported the ideas of the Progressive movement and believed in a strong education for his, and all, children.

Ever and Anna Johnson



Ever and Anna Johnson.
Zion Church 75th Anniversary Book.

On May 20, 1863, Ever E. was born in Ostre Toten, Norway to Even and Agnette Johnson. Six years later the Johnson family, including three more children, spent nine weeks crossing the Atlantic Ocean on their way to North America. Landing in Quebec, the family made their way west settling in Nicolette County, Minnesota for three years. In 1872 the family moved once more to Skandia Township, where Frederick Norwood, one of their neighbors from Ostre Toten, had already settled.

The Johnsons lived in their wagon until a sod house was built. Five years later they were able to build a frame house. During the first year in Skandia, Even and John, the oldest son, left the rest of the family so they could work up north in order to raise enough money to purchase the supplies necessary to farm the next season. With only a little flour and a milk cow to support the family, Ever stepped up to collect eggs and hunt/trap animals to help feed the family.

Ever and Anna Johnson (Continued)



Johnson Family Stone.

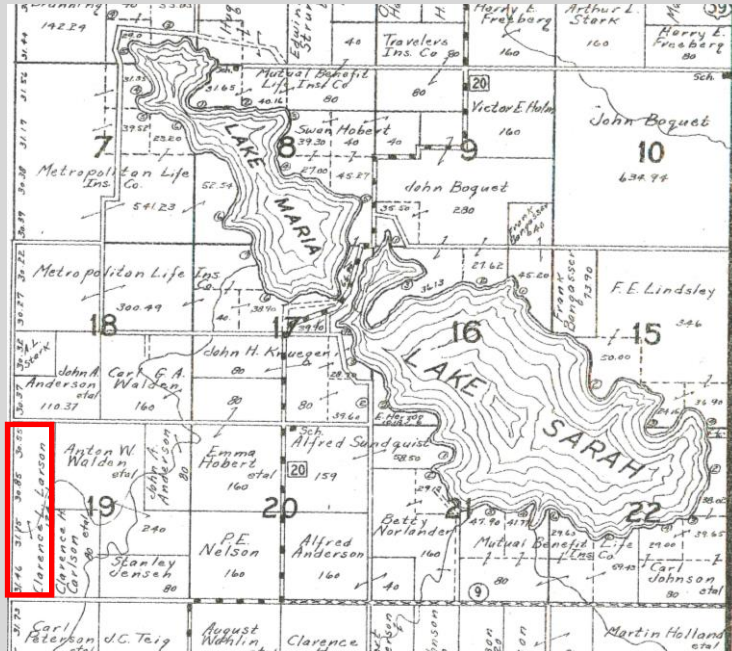
In 1881, Brita Anderson and her 16-year-old daughter, Anna, moved to Skandia Township near Iron Lake from Fillmore County, Minnesota.

Ever and Anna were married on December 27, 1888. They welcomed 13 children into the world, 10 lived to adulthood. They lived and farmed for 58 years on the land adjoining Ever's parents.

Ever and Anna were both active members of the Zion Lutheran Church. Anna was a part of the Ladies Aid Group and Ever served as the Church Secretary for 52 years. Ever was also a charter member of the Western Mutual Fire Insurance Company and was a self-taught veterinarian.

Anna, whose health had been failing for several years, passed away in the Tyler hospital on July 14, 1946. Two years later, Ever passed away on April 2, 1948, shortly after having a stroke.

Clarence and Martha Larson



Clarence and Martha Larson
farm in Lake Sarah Township.
1943 MC Plat Book.

Clarence Ledu Larson was born on April 23, 1910, to Carl and Ida Larson, farmers in Skandia Township. On November 30, 1928, Clarence married Martha Hutton of Balaton. The couple lived in a separate house on the same farmstead as Clarence's parents for several years until 1940 when they purchased a farm of their own in Lake Sarah Township.

During their marriage, the couple welcomed two children into their family, Ronald and Janet. After 21 years farming in Lake Sarah Township, Clarence and Martha decided to move to Marshall where Martha worked part time at the Swift and Produce Company.

This is where the Larson's story takes a sharp turn. In the early morning hours of December 19, 1961, Clarence reported that Martha had been helping him elevate corn before she left for work. They were using a 1948 A.M. Farmall tractor with a power takeoff to operate the elevator. Clarence claimed that he had climbed to the top of the corncrib to make sure the corn was settling evenly while Martha finished scooping the corn. Suddenly, with a loud thump, the power take off ground to a halt. Looking below, Clarence saw Martha's feet in the air. He climbed down quickly to help her but found her unresponsive, and with no pulse, tangled in the power take off.

Clarence and Martha Larson (Continued)



Martha Larson.
Larry Sloan Collection.

Neighbors and Dr. Remseberg of Tracy were called to the scene. Martha's body was taken to Swenson's Mortuary in Balaton to be prepared for her funeral; however, the Murray County Coroner, Dr. Hugh Patterson, had reason to believe foul play may have been involved and requested an autopsy be performed. The first autopsy, and a second conducted in April, found that Martha had died of injuries to her head caused by blunt force, and that the wounds she had received from the power take off were most likely caused after her death.

Clarence was indicted on December 4, 1963, for first degree murder. Because of the publicity surrounding the incident, Larson's case received a change of venue to Cottonwood County. This case was the first murder case in the history of Cottonwood County. The trial began on March 4, 1963. On March 12, after both sides had a chance to argue their point, Judge Charles Flinn dismissed the case stating that the evidence was not sufficient enough to convict Larson. Larson walked out of the courthouse that day a free man.

Clarence and Martha Larson (Continued)



Jean and Clarence. Tracy Area Headlight herald. January 8, 1970.

Larson's story does not end there. Three years after Martha's death, Clarence Married Jean Sande of Tracy in 1964. Sixteen years later in October 1980, Jean went missing. The last known sighting of Jean was on October 5, 1980, when she stopped in a local ceramics shop where she was working on making Christmas presents for family members and friends.

When concerned neighbors asked Clarence where Jean was, he responded with several different stories – she went to Wisconsin, she was in the Twin Cities getting treatment, she was visiting friends in California. Clarence waited until October 31 to report Jean missing.

Clarence and Martha Larson (Continued)



Clarence Larson. Windom Reporter. March 6, 1963.

A full-scale investigation was conducted in the hopes of finding Jean. During the investigation, a considerable amount of blood splatter was found in the kitchen of the Larson home in Tracy. The yard was excavated, countless people were interviewed, and a clairvoyant from New York was called in to assist investigators.

To this day, Jean has never been found. It was not until 1981 that Minnesota laws were amended to allow for a murder charge without a body. Because Jean disappeared before this time, no charges were made against Clarence.

Clarence and Martha Larson (Continued)

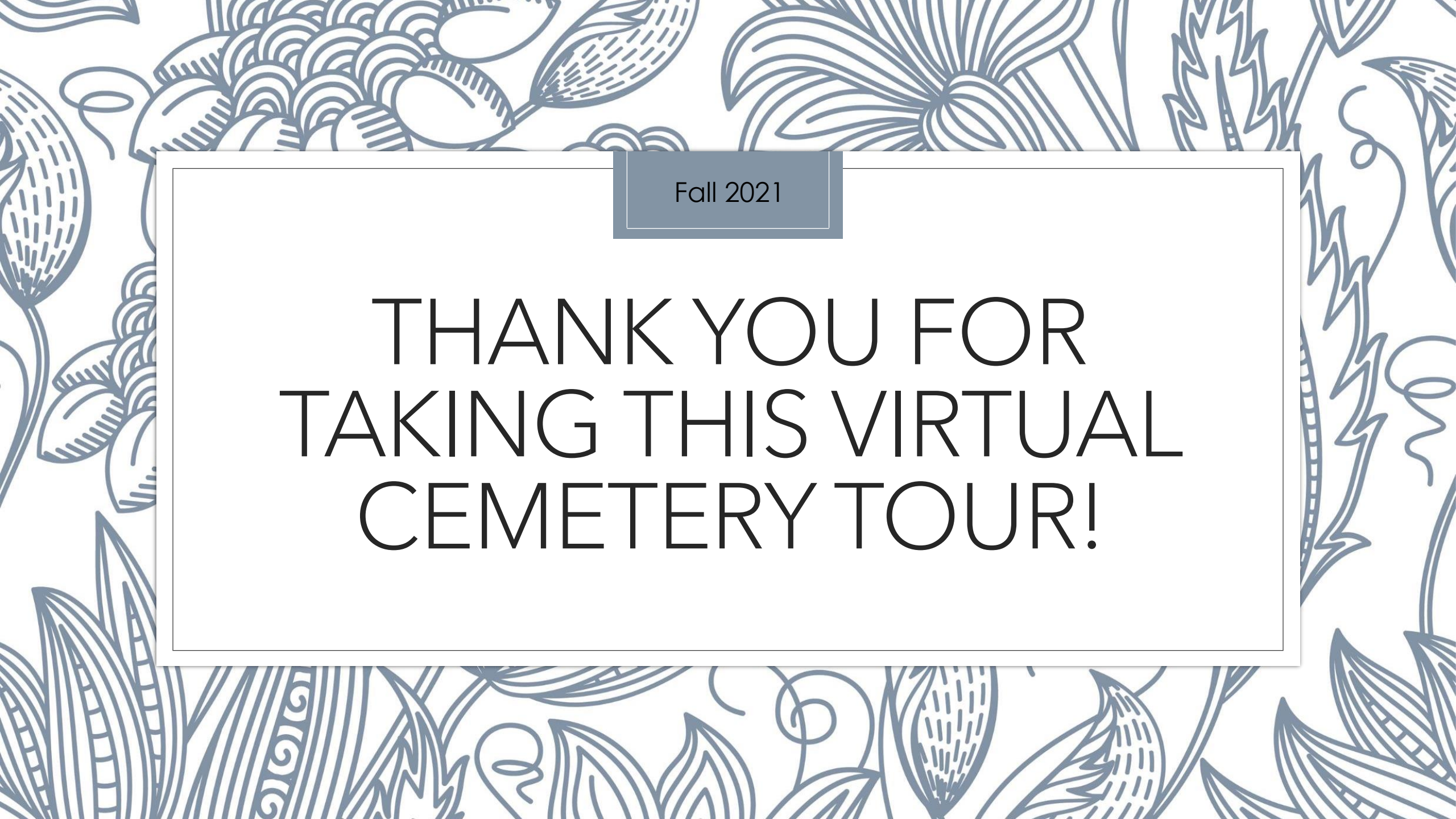
Clarence remained living in Tracy until 1994 when he sold his home and moved to Tennessee to live with his daughter Janet. Clarence died on March 18, 2002, in a Tennessee nursing home at the age of 91. His body was transported back to Minnesota where he is buried here next to Martha



Martha Larson's Stone.



Clarence Larson's Stone.



Fall 2021

THANK YOU FOR
TAKING THIS VIRTUAL
CEMETERY TOUR!