



MY SJØLIE ANCESTORS

By Kenneth Domier

My mother was Ida Luella Sjolie, born at Norquay, Saskatchewan in 1912. She passed away in 2001. Her father was Lars Olsen Sjølie, born in 1865 at Aamodt, Rendalen, Hedmark, Norway. In 1888 he emigrated to Clark Center, South Dakota with Gurin Holmslien, his future brother-in-law. Lars and Gurin took up homesteads at Lilly, South Dakota. Lars was the oldest son of Ole Larsen Sjølie (1834-1914) who took over the farm Vestre (Western) Holmslia from his father Lars Olsen Sjølie (1809-1881). The father of Lars Olsen Sjølie was Ole Larsen Kveberg (1781-1845) who bought the Nedre (Lower) Sjølie farm at an auction in 1823 from the estate of Halsten Sjølie who hanged himself because he couldn't get his mortgage extended. Ole Larsen Kveberg moved from Alvdal to Nedre Sjølie and assumed the surname Sjølie. Ole Larsen Kveberg also bought Vestre Holmslia at the auction. Nedre Sjølie is north of another large Sjølie farm called Øvre (Upper) Sjølie.

Vestre Holmslia was on the western side of a large lake called Storsjøen. Ole Larsen Sjølie and others formed a company that built a boat called RENEN which carried passengers from one end of the lake to the other. When the railroad was built, there was no need for a large boat and the shares in the boat RENEN were worthless. In 1889 Ole Larsen Sjølie declared bankruptcy and he and his wife Eline and the remaining six children emigrated to Lilly, South Dakota. One of Ole's sons, Johannes, died in 1890 at the age of 15. The cause of death and the place of burial is not known. Another son, Olaf, became a successful businessman with stores in Bradley and Wallace, South Dakota.

My grandfather Lars Olsen Sjolie moved from Lilly, South Dakota to Bergen, North Dakota in 1901 where he took up a homestead. On an adjoining farm was Annie Erlandsdatter Johnson born at Coon Valley, Wisconsin in 1873. Annie and her brother Edward Johnson both had homesteads in the same area as Lars. In 1905 Lars and Annie were married in Minot, North Dakota. In 1909 Lars and Annie and two sons, Olaf and Albert, left for Neewin, Saskatchewan to join Edward Johnson, Annie's sister Thea and her husband John Olsen Strand and four others of the Johnson family who sought land in north-east Saskatchewan.

Neewin, the Post office, was disbanded when the railway came through in 1912 and a town site called Norquay was established. Lars and Annie Sjolie had a rock pile of a homestead north of Norquay. Four more children, Elmer, Ida (my mother), Gordon and Thelma were born at the homestead. In 1919 Lars and Annie and the six children moved to the North Prairie area north of Preeceville, Saskatchewan. Lars had trouble making payments on the land and moved several times, finally ending up on rented land south of Sturgis, Saskatchewan. Sons Albert and Elmer became successful farmers. Ida Luella Sjolie came to Norquay to cook for Helmer Domier whose wife had died. They married and had four children, Violet, Robert, Kenneth (me) and Duane. Helmer was born at Portland, North Dakota in 1896 and came to the Norquay area in 1913 to live with his brother Alfred who homesteaded in 1912. Both Alfred and Helmer were in the Canadian Army in WW 1. Helmer obtained land from the Soldier Settlement board in 1920 and farmed until retirement in 1962. He passed away in 1994.

I have been at Nedre Sjølie which is north of Rena in Østerdalen. Olav Sjølie, a fifth cousin, has bought up most of the land that was originally held by both Sjølie families (those who rightfully can claim the Sjølie name and those who are descendents of Ole Larsen Kveberg who bought Nedre Sjølie and took the surname Sjølie). In 2001 Olav Sjølie took me to Vestre Holmslia where my great grandfather Ole Larsen Sjølie went bankrupt. It is no longer in the family and nobody has lived there for 100 years. Several fireplaces can be seen but trees have grown up where the buildings and yard were.

For a long time we thought that the descendents of Lars Olsen Sjolie (my grandfather) were the only Sjolies in Canada. Now we have found others whose ancestors were Sjolie when they came to Canada but changed their name to Shirley which is easier to say and spell. Sjolie has been pronounced Shirley as some Norwegians use a thick letter which is "rl" and thus Sjolie comes out as Shirley. However Olav Sjølie in Norway assured me that Sjølie is not pronounced Shirley.

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