

Thorstein Olsen Bjorland Bjaadland

Thorstein Olsen Bjorland 2/27/1795—5/7/1874 had worked for five years for the government as a mail carrier. He was dissatisfied with the division of his father's property.

When the cask was out of the water it was found to be completely covered with barnacles, so it must have been in the sea a long time. At least the senior members of the crew got enough under its influence so that by the time the ship drifted into the harbor of Funchal, she was without colors and apparently without command. Here it was feared the Sloop was a plague ship with the crew dead or dying, and that a pestilence was being brought into the city. A German ship from Bremen was anchored nearby and, having seen that the cannon of the harbor fortress were already aimed at the strange vessel, called across the water the anxious command, "Hoist flag! Hoist flag!". This alerted the party to their danger and a hurried search was made for the Norwegian flag which had been stowed somewhere with other baggage. Meanwhile Bertha Nelson stood up on the prow and disregarding the immodest display of her legs, waved her bright calico skirt to prevent the cannon from being fired. Thorstein Olsen Bjorland, another passenger, finally found the flag and assisted by others, ran it up to the top of the mast. Soon afterward a couple of Portuguese customs officers came on board and found all things in good order.



In 1829 Thorstein Olsen Bjorland, went to Michigan. This was a natural move because with the completion of the Erie Canal newcomers from New York, New England, and Germany were moving by water to Detroit and farming the surrounding country. Thorstein remained in Michigan long enough to learn the trade of a shoemaker — probably, at least a year, perhaps several years. He may well have been the first Norwegian to live in Michigan. He returned to Murray by 1833.

Families went out west in Illinois Jan., 1835, Thorstein Olson and Knud Anderson (Slogvig), bachelors, went with the party.

The Indians had one bad habit which sometimes caused damage to the settlers and this was setting fire to the countryside. They did this "for amusement" according to Johannes Nordboe who said that it had hindered the growth of woods. One of their fires proved disastrous for one of the Sloopers, Thorstein Olson. This fire spread through the prairie grass and over his farm in sections 6 and 7 and burned his log house with all its contents to the ground.



In the Spring of 1840 a party of Vossings and a party of Stavangerings left Fox River to take up homes in the southeast corner of Dans County, Wisconsin. Among the six Stavangerings was Thorstein Olson (Bjorland). Traveling on foot they went through Shabbona Grove and along the Rock River, except that they passed in the vicinity of Milton and then crossed the Rock at Goodrich's Ferry, Thorstein Olson selected the tract in Albion Township lying across a small tributary (flowing NW to SE) of nearby Koshkonong Creek, and about four miles northwest of Lake Koshkonong. He walked to Milwaukee and entered the land in the government land office on June 22, 1840, and paid for it.

During the summer of 1840 Thorstein Olson built sod shanties on their land. In the fall Thorstein had some visitors — three Vossings en route from Fox River to land in Christiania Township just to the north. One, Lars Davidson Rekve, was glad to find that his host was a shoemaker and willing to effect some much needed repairs. Thorstein returned to Fox River for the winter and in the spring of 1841 went back to Koshkonong.

For the second trip north he had the company of Bjorn Anderson Kvelve. Bjorn had a wagon and an unbroken pair of black steers which were kept in line by coupling them up with Thorstein's yoke of oxen. In Albion, Bjorn's family lived with Thorstein in his shanty while they built a little log house three fourths of a mile away by a spring on Bjorn's land. In a few weeks the Amund Anderson family arrived and were given a royal welcome.

There were those who took advantage of this and as a result Thorstein lost his farm, possibly as early as 1861. He had some money coming from his family in Norway but having expressed dissatisfaction with the original distribution, he was too proud to ever write back for it.

Thorstein and his family may have moved to a little log house on the neighboring farm of Bjorn Anderson Kvelve, for it was there that he died in 1874. It is believed that in America he never actually joined the Lutheran Church, and perhaps kept to the Haugean or Quaker persuasion. He is probably buried in the Liberty Prairie Cemetery of Liberty Prairie, Wisconsin.