

The Sagedahl Waltz

Master Fiddler and Luthier, Elling Sagedalen was born in 1831 in Fla Hallingdal, Norway. He and his family immigrated to Spring Grove, Minnesota in 1852 before Elling sought out his own place in Norway Lake Township in 1865. It was here that he made his home and where he, and multiple generations of his family, lived and farmed – just a mile and a half south of the Wick farm. Elling farmed, but he also played and made Hardanger fiddles. His fiddles were so coveted that one fiddler, who couldn't afford to buy one outright, had to work for a year on Elling's farm to acquire one of these masterpieces.



Detail of Elling's homemade Hardanger (courtesy of Joan Larson)



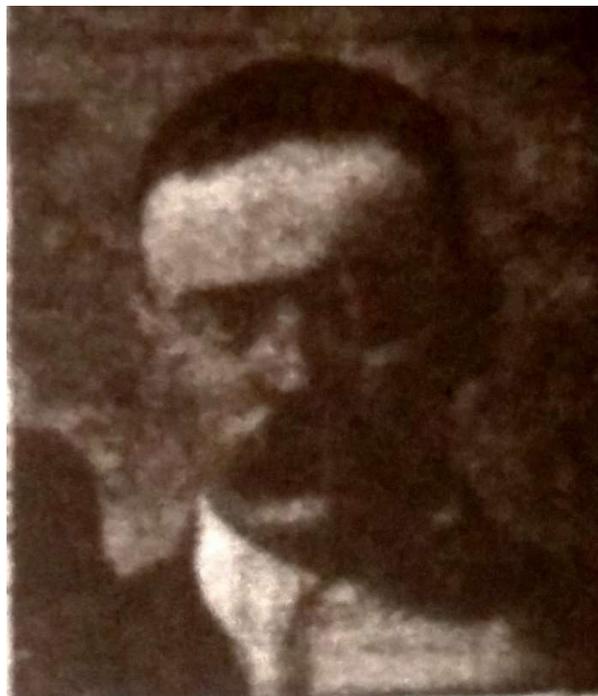
One of Elling Sagedalen's fiddles (made circa 1890)

The Sagedahl Waltz



Detail of Elling's homemade Hardanger

Elling had five children with his first wife and two children with his second wife. Elling died in 1902 after making more than ten Hardanger fiddles. Besides making and playing fiddles, Elling also brought many tunes from Norway with him. These tunes were learned, by ear, by his son and grandsons. Ole Sagedalen, born in 1868, was Elling's youngest son. He inherited the Sagedalen farm and was the next Sagedalen to play the Hardanger fiddle and passed the love of the instrument and music down to his sons. According to Elmo Wicks notes Ole Sagedalen and Edward Wick played dances in the Sunburg area in the 1890's



Ole Sagedalen from his obituary.

The Sagedahl Waltz

It was said by family members that when Ole died, in May 1930, you could hear Hardanger music coming from an upstairs room where his fiddle hung on the wall. Most of Ole's eight sons were also accomplished players. It was after World War I that the Sagedalen brothers choose to change their names from Sagedalen to Sagedahl, and three brothers to Sagedal. Five of the brothers started their own band "The Five Sagedahl's" and they played for a lot of local garden parties and barn dances in the area.



The Sagedahl (Sagedal) brothers courtesy of Joan Larson

When he was younger, Oliver Sagedalen (born 1903) was eager to learn the fiddle but he was told not to touch the expensive fiddles. So, Oliver learned to play on a homemade cigar box strung up to look like a violin. Oliver learned very quickly, and while searching for a new teacher, Oliver was told by one prospective instructor that he couldn't teach Oliver anything that he didn't already know. By 1929 Oliver was playing with Oskie's Big 4 (Oscar Hansen, Oliver Sagedahl, Otto Mattson, Grant Sorenson), and playing gigs as far away as Brooten, Spicer and Benson. In spite of Oliver's popularity, he still had time to stop and play with his neighbors Andrew and Edward Wick. Young Elmo Wick remembered staying up late, sometimes as late as 2 a.m. to listen to all the music sometime in the 1930s.

The Sagedahl Waltz



Oliver Sagedahl on the family farm (courtesy of Joan Larson)



Henry Sagedahl

The Sagedahl Waltz

Henry Sagedahl (born 1909) was a talented player who associated with Elmo Wick, probably in later years when Elmo was living in Brooten and Henry worked as a bus driver and mechanic for the Brooten school district. Henry played in “The Five Sagedahl’s” and the “Pee Wee” band.



The Sagedalen farm as it looks today.



Oliver Sagedahl with Morris Chargo in the KWLM studio

The Sagedahl Waltz

Oliver later became a member of "The Jolly Four" band which played at social events and could be heard on Willmar radio station KWLM during the "Rudy's Old Timers" program, and the even more famous Morris Chargo band. Oliver was on tour with one of his bands when the armistice day blizzard struck (November 1940), and they were lucky enough to find a farm where they could shelter. In 1942 Oliver Sagedahl married Bernice Tiege. Oliver was still with the Morris Chargo band during the Circus Animal Incident of Feb 1949 which terminated that radio program. Perhaps that was a sign that the musician's life was not one conducive to raising a family. Oliver stopped playing professionally in the early 1950's. He found work as a carpenter, but he still played fiddle for fun, and in the 1970's he could often be found at the jam sessions at Cliff Hanson's "Brooten Barber Shop" located in south Minneapolis.

In his later years Oliver and Bernice Sagedahl moved to Salem, Ohio to live near their daughter. Oliver died in Salem, Ohio in 1984. One tune which was passed from father-to-son was The Sagedahl Waltz. It's a pretty demanding tune which requires moving up into 3rd position and some fingered double stops. We have a recording of Elmo Wick playing the Sagedahl Waltz, we can only assume that he learned the tempo and ornamentation from the Sagedahls directly.