

Charter Member of Concordia

BENDIK GUNDERSON

Bendek Gunderson, a prominent citizen of Clay county, now living in retirement on his farm in Moland township, is known as one of the earliest pioneers of the region.

Mr. Gunderson was born in Telernarken, Christiansandstift, Norway, September 6, 1822. His father, Gunder, owned the farm Gjedestad, and our subject being the eldest son of the family, inherited the home farm at his father's death. Farming his native land, however, did not prove a success, and in 1861 he sold out, and after clearing up his debts had about \$200 in money and with this he brought his family to America, June 15, 1861. He settled in Houston county, and farmed for ten years, operating a forty-acre farm. Acting upon the advice of his brother, Ole Gunderson Thortvedt, the pioneer of the Buffalo river region, our subject went to Clay county in June, 1871, journeying by team from Houston county. He reached Clay county after a trying journey and purchased the relinquishment to the farm which he now owns. He lived in his wagon until a log house could be erected, 14x16 feet, with elm bark roof. His first crop in 1872 was destroyed by grasshoppers, and he got no returns from his farm until the following year, when he raised three hundred bushels of wheat. He was compelled in the meantime to get his supplies at Alexandria, one hundred and forty miles distant, the trip consuming twelve days. Those trying times caused many of the settlers to leave their lands, but our subject persevered, and as times grew better he purchased railroad land and began to succeed. He now owns one hundred and seventy-eight acres of land on the Buffalo river, and has retired from active labors, turning the farm over to his son.

Mr. Gunderson has been active in public affairs in the county. He had no English education, but in the early days he drew up a petition in his own language and had it translated into English, and it was owing to the circulation of this petition that his township was organized. He is an active church worker, and was instrumental in the building of the Norwegian Lutheran church in Moland township, and has been a liberal contributor to church work. In politics Mr. Gunderson is a Republican.

In 1853 our subject was married to Annie Aavalclsen. To this marriage eleven children have been born, namely: Gunder; Jennie, deceased; Sina, deceased; Oval; Andreas; Ole, deceased; Hilbert, deceased; Andrew, deceased; Olaus; Sina; and Olaf.