

The Stavig Letters

The Stavig Family Timeline

- 1844 Lars born November 21 in Romsdal, Norway
- 1869 Andrew born on December 20
- 1872 Hans born
- 1874 Magnus born
- 1876 Lars & Maren and sons leave Norway
reach MN in June – lived on Einar Johnson farm for three years
- 1877 Lars spent the summer cutting timber for Fort Sisseton
- 1878 The year of the grasshoppers destroying all the crops in their area of MN
- 1879 “squatted” / settled on railroad land – stayed there five years
Louise was born in MN
- 1881 Anna was born in MN
the town of Webster in Dakota Territory was established
- 1883 filed on two quarter sections of land in Day County, Dakota Territory in the fall
- 1884 Lars and family moved 100 miles west to Dakota Territory in the spring with three other families
Summer – built a 14x16 house and a barn of sod, poles and slough grass
- 1885 Peder was born at the homestead
- 1888 Blizzard year – 243 deaths in SD
Edwin was born at the homestead in the spring
Lars sent tickets for Maren’s parents, Hans & Melina Hustad to come to live with them
A new church and a new school were built “no money at the bottom of the chest” Lars says
Andrew is in Webster going to school to learn English
- 1889 Hans studying business at Willmar Seminary
- 1892 Opening of the Sisseton Wahpeton Indian Reservation
Sisseton is established
- 1893 Andrew and Magnus are in school
Building a choir loft for our church – 3 miles away – can see it from the window in his house
Hans marries Pauline Paulson at Grenville church July 11 & buys 160 acre farm 12 miles from home
- 1894 Andrew is “peddling” (has two horses and is doing well)
Magnus is an English teacher and is living and working at home
- 1895 Andreas and Magnus are going to school in MN part of the year – Willmar Seminary
Magnus also teaches English for three months in the fall
Difficult year for illness (including Andrew)
Maren, Lars’ wife, is well respected as a mid-wife in the area
- 1896 Andrew marries Mary Peterson of Liberty on Sept 26 at the Stavig family homestead
Move to Sisseton in October and go into partnership with M.L. Sateren on a general store
Andrew & Mary live in the back of the 20x34 store
Andrew, Hans and Magnus all own land – Magnus still lives at home & teaching

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- Louise is with Hans & his wife – they are expecting (have lost two babies soon after birth)
Anna, Peder and Edwin are at home & Lenore Sunde, age 5, whose mother died
- 1898 Sateren sells his share of the store to Andrew & Hans -already the largest store in Sisseton
Hans becomes partner in the store; Lena alone on the farm to prove claim
Magnus marries Bertha Thorson of Grenville on Nov 6 and joins brothers in town (first year they live in the upstairs of Andrew & Mary's home; Agnes born May 15
ten hotels in Sisseton, six saloons, five gambling houses, 3 newspapers, 3 banks, 16 lawyers
- 1899 October - Peder broke his hip
Wife's parents, Malina and Hans live at homestead and get around well
- 1900 Hans and Lena move to Sisseton – rent a small house which burns to the ground – move to large home on top of hill - \$1,000 house
Magnus and Bertha build a house near Andrew & Hans where they live until 1912 - \$1,000
Peder has been in the hospital in Mpls for his hip – hard to find good help on the farm
Edwin is in school and is doing so well he doesn't get home to help on the farm
Anna meets Norwegian newcomer Ole Torness (worked at hardware store in Webster)
Lars is starting to wonder if he can keep farming
Stavig Bros. Store is doing well – 7 employees – added on, now 125' w/ a basement – largest volume of business in Roberts County
Andrew has two daughters, Hans has three daughters and Magnus a one-year-old boy
- 1901 Sisseton is growing – 1,000 people – putting in running water – 4 churches (one Norw. Luth)
Lars adds on to his barn and is looking for a dependable hired man – will send ticket to Norway
Peter is in Sisseton staying with Andrew
- 1902 Lars sends tickets to people in Norway that want to come
Louise Stavig marries Andrew Anderson on May 25
- 1903 Magnus & Bertha have two sons – they are learning Norwegian and English
They make a buying trip to the East Coast
- 1904 Mathilda (Andrew & Mary) born August 4
Anna is living at home – marries Ole Torness at Christmas that year
Peder and Edwin are going to school in Minnesota
Sisseton has grown to 1,400-1,500 people
Stavig's Store is growing, they now have 11 employees; Stavig fur business starts up
It takes 4 hours to drive from Sisseton to the homestead when the roads are dry – 28 miles
Lars and Maren make their first trip for the Norwegian Lutheran Church meeting in Albert Lea
Titanic??
- 1905 Magnus writes about all the change that has taken place in the 13 years that the reservation has been open – schools every 3 miles, churches, lots of nationalities, multiple languages...
- 1907 Lars can no longer do his own work on the farm – must hire all the help – lonesome w/o children
Peder is working with his brothers at the store – Edwin is at St. Olaf College
Andrew and Mary another baby just before Christmas – the third to die
A hard winter – lots of snow and poor roads

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- 27 store employees during the Christmas season – Ole Torness manages new furniture dept.
11 of 22 year-around clerks were born in Norway – salary was \$2/day
- 1908 Amos (Andrew & Mary) born August 8
October 17 – Maren Hustad Stavig dies in Mpls from an operation for gallstones
Lars rents out the farm and moves to Sisseton renting an upstairs room from Peder and Tillie
Store is enlarged again
- 1909 Lars took a three-week train trip to Seattle for an exhibition – sees enough mountains so he doesn't need to go back to Norway!
October 1 – farm auction at the homestead
- 1911 Lars recalls his old girlfriend Anna Vesta and inquires about her
Very dry summer
- 1912 Lars becomes ill in April – illness continues through the year
Concerned about divisions in the church
Edwin is at Princeton University
Andrew is not well – has three children living, three children that died
Hans has six children, two are dead; Magnus has six children, all living
Peder has had two sons, one living, one died. Anna has four children. Louise, none.
Olaf Torness and his sister Inga are working the farm / they take half the crop
- 1913 Andrew has appendicitis surgery in Minneapolis, son Clifford born April 17
Lars makes ocean to ocean trip from NY to Seattle (with Andrew??)
- 1914 Soo Line Railroad completed from Rosholt to Grenville – store purchased lots in nearly
Every townsite sale; railroad comes close to homestead now
Stavig Bros. Store begins tradition of giving out religious calendars at Christmas –
Catholic & Protestant (at first printed in Norwegian, Swedish and English)
Anna and Ole Torness' oldest daughter, Mathilda, died abruptly of spinal meningitis
(she was 9 years old)
- 1915? Edwin marries Lydia Rusten in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in the fall. They met at St. Olaf
- 1916 Andrew moves into his new house in July (Agnes, 18, Mathilda, 11, Amos Marvin, 7, Clifford, 2)
The children attend Norwegian Sunday School and Norwegian Bible School 4 weeks summer
Hans has seven daughters. Magnus has 6 children. Peder has two and Anna has five.
Edwin is a partner with Stavig Bros in a store in the new town of Rosholt 30 miles (1 ½ hours)
Harvest has been good and prices high, cattle prices are good – Stavigs are farming as well
Cold winter lots of snow – new sewer system in Sisseton, new library, other new buildings
- Louise and her husband are raising the son of the daughter of Knut Stavig. He is 15 – had him since the age of 4 – they live on a farm near Roslyn
- 1917 Magnus and Anna both have new babies in their families.
Hans and Magnus make a trip to Washington, DC
Agnes Stavig graduates from high school, Mathilde is in 7th grade, Amos in 3rd, Clifford is 3, Hilma Ruth is born on August 9. Mary's brother and sister live with them.

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- Stavig Bros. business is 20 years old
Main Street fire on October 25 starts in Stavigs Store and destroys most of Main Street
World War I
- 1918 Spanish influenza afflicts many
Trying to build a new store – materials and labor expensive
Olaf Torness is still on the Lars Stavig homestead
- 1919 Move into new store
Lars is 75 years old – works every day at the store putting furniture together
Expresses concern about the changes –language and the way people treat one another
HLT is born May 1
- 1920 Lawrence became ill the last day of school in Northfield – blood poisoning, becomes very sick
Hans' family – Laura is married to a dentist in Sisseton; Hilda married and lives in the country, Evelyn is in nursing school in Mpls, Mabel will graduate from high school. Irene has two years of High school left and Esther is 11 years old and Thelma is 6 years old. Wife's mother lives with them – 85 and bedridden.
Uncertain times –
Pastor Vang from Chicago at Goodwill Church. (followed Pastor Rudie? for 20 years)
Services in Norwegian and English
- 1922 Lars was very sick during the summer, nearly died, recovered and is 78 years old
Lawrence Stavig (Magnus' son) has two years left in the Seminary; two siblings at St. Olaf
Hans has one daughter at St. Olaf
Peder's children – a boy age 14 and a girl age 7
Anna has many children, all in school in Sisseton. Ole Torness in a car accident that cut his hand
Edwin has two children and lives in Rosholt
Agnes is teaching in northern MN, Mathilda is at St. Olaf, Clifford, Amos and Hilma (age 5) are
At home along with Mary's brother, sister and a cousin who all live with them
- 1923 Grandchildren of Lars are at Northfield studying to be pastors, doctors, professors and lawyers
The women are learning all crafts
- 1924 tough time for farming / banks in trouble
- 1929 Lars is 85 and has been in Sisseton for 20 years – four walls, two windows frozen over with ice
Andreas is not well and Louise has cancer and Anna on gallbladder surgery
Sisseton put in three new wells that were 850 feet deep
Peder lost his only son on his 21st birthday. Peder has his own store in Sisseton
A cyclone hit the homestead, destroying the barn and chicken house, uprooting trees
- 1930 times are difficult
Anna, Andrew and Louise all have health problems
- 1931 Anna died on January 27 from pneumonia following surgery for a stomach ulcer – 49 years old
Leaving Ole with nine children, ranging in age from 6 years to 23 years old
Clara – works at the store, Laura teaches school in the country, Oscar is at the store, the rest at home – Arthur, Myrtle, Agnes, Harold, Alice and Linnie. Lars stays in his room.

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- 1932 Lars is 88 years old on Nov. 21st. He has been bed-ridden for 18 months. He has been at Hans And Pauline's where she cares for him.
Andrew & Mary celebrate Andrew's 36th year of business by inviting 60 guests to their home In October for a meal. **Agnes read the history of the store that she had written.**
- 1933 Lars' daughter Louise dies on June 27
Lars dies on July 27 – funeral, Pastor Hofstad. **Rev. Lawrence Stavig gave message**
Crop failure, drought, hard times
- 1934 the Depression – high unemployment – terrible times for everyone
Agnes marries R. Bernhard Swanberg at the family home on Nov 8.
Andrew dies on February 1. He had been in the store for 39 years
- 1935 Hans and Magnus continue the business (had worked with Andrew for 37 years)
30-40 people employed at the store
Stavig family has been in Dakota for 51 years now
- 1936 Edwin – difficult times, lost money on land in Rosholt. Alf, 19 – Concordia, Sylvia – 15, Roger – 6
- 1937 61 years since Lars and Maren left Norway
Andrew's wife Mary dies March 4
Lawrence (Magnus' son and a pastor in Northfield) was at Oxford University in England
Lawrence and Magnus make a trip to Norway to visit the relatives and Knut, over 80
Lectured about Norway – St. Olaf radio station
Mathilda, Amos, Clifford work in the store. Agnes and Ben Swanberg and have 2 daughters and live in the house next door to the family home
- 1938 Ole Torness marries Clara Klukken (who had worked in Magnus' home for several years)
Lawrence mentions that Knut should send Lars' letters back to America when he is done with them
- 1939 Stavigs Store employs 40-50 people, much comes in & much goes out...
Times are difficult – war clouds hang heavy and dark...
Hans' youngest daughter Thelma died
- 1940 final letter from Magnus to Knut
- 1950 Knut dies in Norway at the age of 99