

1925

*A Century of Immigration and Achievement  
by Norse-Americans*

A CENTURY'S ACHIEVEMENTS BY NORWEGIAN AMERICANS

A hundred years have passed since the Norwegian sloop "Restaurationen" cast anchor in New York harbor carrying the first <sup>contingent</sup> load of Norwegian immigrants to our shores. During these hundred years the pioneer <sup>se</sup> immigrants <sup>emigrants from Norway</sup> have been followed by ~~ten~~ of thousands of their countrymen from year to year until now the Norwegian population of the United States is virtually equal to the total population of their native land, ~~Norway~~. These hundred years have been diligently improved by the Norwegian immigrants to the United States and their descendants. They have erected monument upon monument to their industry, thrift, power of adaptation, endurance, <sup>ability and</sup> intelligence, and ~~foresight~~. It is, therefore, with commendable pride that <sup>this sturdy element of our population</sup> the Norwegian-American of today looks back upon a century of achievements in practically every walk of life, and in commemoration of these achievements the Norwegian-Americans will this year celebrate, on a gigantic scale, the <sup>one hundredth</sup> ~~100th~~ anniversary of the arrival of the first small <sup>group</sup> contingent of Norwegian immigrants to this land of liberty and opportunity.

*St. Paul, Minn.* The celebration will take place at the State Fair Grounds, June 6 to 9, under the auspices of various Norwegian patriotic organizations. Distinguished people in the United States, the old Fatherland, and Canada will be present to participate in these festivities. Among the most prominent men who have already accepted invitations to participate are President Calvin Coolidge,

~~Prince Olaf of Norway~~, representatives of the Norwegian govern-  
 ment, Bishop Lunde of Oslo, and representatives of the Dominion  
 government. <sup>One striking feature of the celebration will be the presence</sup> The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, the largest  
 Norwegian Lutheran church body in this country, is also making  
 extensive preparations for the celebration of this event. The  
 committee in charge of <sup>the arrangements</sup> ~~preparing~~ <sup>will</sup> ~~has arranged~~  
 to publish an authentic illustrated history of Norwegians in Ameri-  
 ca, <sup>written by Dr. M. O. Nordie, Luther College, Decorah, Iowa</sup> and also to publish a commemorative Cantata, the music of which  
<sup>It</sup> ~~will be~~ <sup>is</sup> written by Dr. E. Melius Christianson, director of the  
 famous St. Olaf choir. Memorial services will be held in prac-  
 tically all of the nearly 3,000 congregations of this body on  
 Sunday, July 5th. <sup>Furthermore, the U.S. Post Office Department</sup>

<sup>will issue a special centennial stamp in two and five cent denominations</sup>  
 When the little sloop "Restaurationen" glided into New York  
 harbor on the 9th day of October, 1825, it attracted considerable  
 attention. Its arrival was announced by the New York Evening  
 Post of October 10, 1825, the New York Daily Advertiser of October  
 12, 1825, and a number of other papers. The New York Daily Ad-  
 vertiser gives an interesting account of the ship and its passen-  
 gers, under the Caption "A Novel Sight". <sup>vanguard</sup> The ~~first~~ contingent of  
<sup>l.c</sup> Norwegian immigrants consisted of 53 persons, the youngest of  
 whom was born aboard the ship enroute. The passengers were,  
 strange to say, Norwegian Quakers. In 1807, among other Norwegian  
 sailors, a sailor by the name of Lars Larson was captured by the  
 English in the war with Denmark. He remained a prisoner of war  
 for seven years in England, during which time he learned to speak  
 the English language fluently and also became converted to the

Quaker religion. After his release from prison he was in the employe of a prominent Quaker leader <sup>body</sup> by the name of Margaret

*Cop* <sup>A</sup> Ellen. Upon his return to Norway in 1816 he founded a society of friends in his native city Stavanger. The Quakers were not looked upon very favorably by the Lutheran Clergy and the members of the Lutheran State Church, and finally decided to leave their native land for the freer <sup>religious</sup> atmosphere of the United States. In 1821 two advance agents were sent out by the little society of *Cop* friends to America. These men, Kleng Peerson and Knud Olson Eide, spent three years <sup>investigating conditions and</sup> in and about New York returning to Norway in 1824. Upon receiving the reports of their emissaries the little band prepared to leave for the New World. The sloop sailed from Stavanger July 4, 1825, and arrived in New York harbor October 9, after an eventful voyage of 14 weeks.

Kleng Peerson was a leader and adventurer among the early immigrants, leading them first to New York, then to Illinois, and finally to Texas. He died in Texas December 16, 1865, and was buried in the Lutheran Cemetery at Norse, ~~in~~ Bosque county. Here a small stone munument, bearing the following inscription in both Norwegian and English, marks his grave:

'Cleng Peerson,  
The first Norwegian immigrant  
to  
America  
Came to America in 1821  
Born in Norway, Europe, May 17, 1782  
Died in Texas December 16, 1865  
Grateful countryman in Texas erected this  
monument to his memory

The first settlement was made at <sup>a and</sup> Kendell, Orleans county, <sup>es</sup> New York, ~~on the shores of Lake Ontario about~~ <sup>west</sup> 35 miles northeast of Rochester, then newly founded. The settlement was made in November just before the winter set in. A log house was hastily built into which the immigrants crowded for shelter and comfort during the first winter spent in America. The only employment the men could find was threshing with a flail and for this work they received every eleventh bushel threshed. The years spent here were full of hardship and suffering and at first they wished themselves back to their native land but they had no means to take them there nor would their pride permit them to return so soon. After a few years of struggle and conquest they were content to remain in America. By the learning of greater opportunities and more congenial surroundings further west they moved westward and settled near Ottawa, La Salle county, Illinois, founding the famous Fox river settlement in 1834. Other settlements were founded in rapid succession from 1836 on as immigrants arrived in large numbers and with greater frequency. In 1836 a settlement was made in Chicago on the site now occupied by the Northwestern station. The unfortunate Beaver Creek settlement in Iroquois county, Illinois, was founded in 1836. After a winter of trying hardships, far from neighbors and base of supplies, they found, to their great disappointment, with the coming of spring that the land on which they had settled was low, marshy, and

malarial. About two-thirds of the small colony, including their chief leader and adviser, Ole Rynning, succumbed to the dread malaria fever and those who remained escaped to the Fox river settlement. The Rock river settlement, Wisconsin, was founded in 1838, the Muskego settlement in Waukesha and Racine counties, Wisconsin, the following year, and Koshkonung, Dane county, Wisconsin, in 1840. As the stream of immigration increased in volume from year to year settlements rapidly multiplied until Norwegians spread over the greater part of the territory of the midwest states, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, and also into Montana, the east and the west coast, and in the south, especially Kansas, Texas, and Virginia.

The Norwegians are an intelligent, hardy, industrious, and law-abiding people who readily adapt themselves to their new environment and, therefore, constitute a very high type of immigrants. Concerning the Scandinavians as a whole, a British government agent in his "Report of the Board of Trade of Great Britain on Alien Immigration to the United States" says: "It is generally admitted that physically, morally, and socially no better class of immigrants enter into the United States. In some respects they are the most desirable of all." Another observer writing in 1868, concerning the Norwegians in Minnesota, says: "They open their farms quicker, raise better stock than most any other class, and quickly become wealthy." A writer in a northwest magazine of October, 1889, writes of the Norwegians in Dakota: "Most of them came with just enough to get on

government land and build a shack..... Now they are loaning money to their less fortunate neighbors.... Every county has Norwegians who are worth from \$25,000 to \$50,000, all made since settling in Dakota." In this connection it is well to bear in mind that the first Norwegian settlement in Dakota territory was made in 1859.

The Norwegian immigrants and their descendants have especially devoted themselves to farming. Wood and brush land has been cleared at a vast expense of both time and labor and converted into fertile fields. The virgin soil of the prairie has been turned and reduced to a high state of cultivation producing large crops of corn, grains, and tame grasses. The marshy lowlands have been tiled and drained and thus translated into highly productive fields. The log hut, sod house, and board shanty of pioneer days have given place to modern, well built, roomy, and palatial residences. Former State Auditor S. G. Iverson of Minnesota estimates that the Norwegian farmers of Minnesota own farm property valued at \$1,200,000,000, a wealth which they have produced since the first Norwegian settlement of Norwegians in Minnesota was made in 1851. According to a survey made by Alfred Gabrielson, working for the state of North Dakota, it was found that out of a total of 32,000,000 acres taxable farm land 7,867,140 acres or about one-fourth of the total was owned by the Norwegian settlers. The value of this land would be between \$400,000,000 and \$500,000,000. The first settlements in what is now North Dakota were made in the Red river valley late in the 60's and

early 70's.

Not only have the Norwegian immigrants distinguished themselves as farmers. Many of them were well trained artisans, such as carpenters, cabinet makers, metal workers, jewelers, tailors, shoemakers, brick layers, etc., and found ready employment in American establishments or established themselves in their respective trades. The qualifications for the work of their trade did not consist merely in Union but in a thorough mastery of their trade acquired by many years of apprenticeship. A large number were experienced woodsmen from Norway and readily took to the logging and lumber camps and many of them became wealthy and influential lumbermen. They have also entered into manufacturing on a very large and extensive scale. Prominent among the Norwegian manufacturing establishments are the agricultural implement factories of Stoughton, Madison, and Beloit, Wisconsin. The large plant for the manufacture of tool machines at Madison, Wisconsin, was founded by a Norwegian immigrant by the name of John O. Johnson. Among the many Norwegian establishments in Chicago is a large chair factory.

In the business world they have also attained marked success, having distinguished themselves in various lines of mercantile, banking, insurance, and other lines of business. Among the more prominent Norwegian bankers the following may be mentioned: Helge A. Haugan, one of the founders and for many years the leading

spirit of the State Bank of Chicago, one of the principal financial institutions of that city. It was founded in 1879. Arne L. Alness, founder and president of the Scandinavian-American Bank of St. Paul, founded in 1887. It is now known as the Exchange State Bank. Harold Thorson, millionaire banker of St. Paul and founder of upwards of 30 banks in North Dakota. Mr. Alness retired from active work five years ago and recently celebrated his 80th birthday. Both Mr. Haugan and Mr. Thorson are dead. Many of the Norwegian immigrants had received a technical education in Norway before graduating, being graduates of the Christiania, Trondhjem, and Bergen Schools of Technology. Upon their arrival in America they entered into various fields of chemical and construction engineering and have contributed in a large measure to the making of many of the larger cities as well as promoting railroad and bridge building. Among the more outstanding construction engineers may be mentioned Gunvald Aus, consulting engineer, and Kort Berle, architect, his partner. Mr. Aus is especially known from his connection with the construction work on the United States Custom House facing Bowling Green, New York, and the designing of the steel work of the famous Woolworth building in which undertaking Mr. Berle also shares honors. Olaf Hoff is famous for his work in connection with the subway tunnels under the Harlem River and the New York Central Railroad Tunnel under the Detroit River. His brother, J. H. Hoff, is chief

engineer for the American Bridge Company at Chicago. Sverre Damm, Berge Furre, Guttorm Miller, and a number of other Norwegian engineers have for many years been engaged on subway construction in New York. Gustav L. Clausen of Chicago is far famed as an expert on sewer construction having been for a number of years superintendent of sewers of Chicago. He has also planned Pullman and Hyde Park, Chicago. A. B. Newmann of Chicago is widely known as an authority on steel plant construction. He has designed and built the large plant of the United States Steel Corporation at Gary, Indiana, as well as planned the new city of Gary. He has also built the plant of the American Rolling Mill Company, Middletown, Ohio, and the Seamless Tube Plants for the Pittsburg Steel Products Company. F. W. Cappelan, for many years city engineer of Minneapolis, is also an outstanding Norwegian American in the engineering world. He came from Drammen, Norway, in the early 80's and was employed for a number of years by the Northern Pacific Railroad company on railroad construction in Montana. Later he became the company's bridge engineer and built the Northern Pacific Bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. The greatest monument erected by him to his engineering skill and ability is the Capellan Memorial Bridge or the Third Avenue Bridge, Minneapolis, which was barely completed at the time of his death October 16, 1921. The city filtration plant is also his work.

he was a candidate on the Democratic ticket for Congressman but was defeated. Although the Norwegians made their first settlement in Dakota territory in 1859, there were present at the first territorial legislature three Norwegians, one in the Senate and two in the House of Representatives. Since those early days the Norwegians have held a large number of local and state offices as well as membership in the legislatures of the states in which they settled. No less than 11 of Norwegian descent have held the office of State Governor. South Dakota has had four Norwegian governors, Minnesota three, North Dakota two, and Wisconsin two. At the present time there are five states that have governors who are Norwegian either by birth or descent. They are Theodore Christianson of Minnesota, A. G. Sorlie of North Dakota, Carl Gunderson of South Dakota, J. E. Erickson of Montana, and J. J. Blane of Wisconsin. Six men of Norwegian extraction have held seats in the United States Senate, three of them being members of the present Congress, Peter Norbeck of South Dakota and Henrik Shipstead of Minnesota, and Reed Smoot of Utah, whose mother was born in Norway. The other senators are Knute Nelson, the grand old man of Minnesota, A. J. Gronna of North Dakota, and Holm O. Bursum of New Mexico. A large number of Norwegians have been elected to Congress, the best known among them being A. J. Volstead of Minnesota. Several Norwegians have been in the

diplomatic service of the United States, among them R. B. Anderson, minister to Denmark; L. S. Swenson, minister to Denmark and Switzerland and twice minister to Norway; N. A. Gravastad, minister to Paraguay and Uruguay; G. B. Ravndahl, general consul, Constantinople; W. C. Magelson of Melbourne, Australia, and Beirut, Syria; and L. S. Reque, Rotterdam, Holland.

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The Norwegian immigrants and their descendants have from the very first proven themselves true and loyal patriots to the adopted land. Ole Oleson Hetletvedt, one of the "sloopers" who arrived in 1825 on "Restaurationen", had three sons, Porter C., Soren L., and James Webster. The family moved from the New York colony and settled at Newark, Ill., where the father died in 1849. When the Civil War broke out all three boys enlisted in Co. F., 36th Regiment, Illinois volunteers, Porter as captain and Soren as sergeant. The regiment left Camp Hammond for the front on September 24, 1861, and took part in many of the fiercest engagements of the war. At the Battle of Stone River, Tenn., December, 1862, and January, 1863, Brigadier-General Sill was killed and Colonel Greusel, commander of the 36th Regiment, took charge of the brigade in place of General Sill. As Major Silas Miller was severely wounded it became necessary for Captain Oleson to take charge of the regiment. In his report of this battle General Sheridan says: "I refer with pride to the splendid conduct, bravery, and efficiency of the following regimental commanders and the officers and men of their respective commands: Major Silas Miller, 36th Illinois, wounded and a prisoner; Captain P. C. Oleson, 36th Illinois."

In this battle Porter's brother, who had been promoted to lieutenant and commanded Co. F. in place of his brother Soren, was killed. On May 11, 1863, Captain Oleson was promoted to lieutenant-colonel. He fell in the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee, November 30, 1864, gallantly leading his regiment. He is buried at Newark, Ill., where an appropriate monument marks his grave. Another son of an early immigrant who won fame in the Civil War was Colonel Hans C. Hegg, who commanded the famous "15th Wisconsin", composed of officers and men almost exclusively of Norwegians. Colonel Hegg took part in many bloody battles and repeatedly distinguished himself as an able commander. He fell in the Battle of Chickamauga, his last words being "I am willing to die for I have fought for a righteous cause." His grave is in the old Lutheran cemetery of the Muskego settlement in Wisconsin. The history of this regiment almost came to an end in the Battle of Chickamauga, for only 75 of those who had taken part in the battle remained alive. Two companies, consisting of 150 men, had, however, been left behind on garrison duty, making a total of 225 left of the once complete regiment. This remnant took part in many other battles including the Battle of Mission Ridge and accompanied Sherman on his March to the Sea.

It has been estimated that some over 7,000 Norwegians enlisted in the different units during the Civil War, many of them fresh from their native land and unable to speak the

language of the land under whose banner they fought, yet willing to shed their blood for the great cause and the preservation of the Union. The same spirit which manifested itself among the Norwegian Americans during the Civil War appeared again in the Norwegians of the next generation during the Spanish-American War. Norwegian soldiers and sailors in large numbers took part in this war and many of them won distinction in service. When the United States entered the World War large numbers of Norwegian Americans joined the ranks voluntarily of the army, air, and naval services, and many others enlisted under the provisions of the draft. Among the 78 American soldiers who received the Congressional Medal of Honor, there were at least four Norwegians, two of them born in Norway and one of them not even an American citizen. The two most outstanding army officers of Norwegian extraction during the war were Col. Jens Bugge and Brig.Gen. Alfred W. Bjornstad. Colonel Bugge was a retired army officer at the time the United States entered the war but because of his ability as a strategist and tactician he was recalled for service as adviser to the general staff in France. Upon his return to America at the close of the war he was appointed commandant at West Point, being the first Norwegian to hold this important post. General Bjornstad was chief of staff of the third army corps in France and since the war has been in charge of several army posts, among them Ft. Snelling and Ft. Omaha. He was recently promoted to become major-general.

The Norwegians early entered the field of journalism in this country. The first Norwegian paper "Nordlyset" (The North Light) was founded in 1847 as an advocate of the Free Soil movement. The first number had a cut of the American flag at the head of a column, giving a translation into Norwegian of the more important parts of the Declaration of Independence. This paper was printed in the home of Colonel Hegg's father, Even Hegg, of the Muskego settlement. The paper survived only two years and was succeeded by "Emigranten" (The Emigrant). From now on a number of smaller papers appeared which lasted for only a short time. In 1866, however, a newspaper was launched that was destined to both grow and endure and has become the most widely circulated Norwegian daily and semi-weekly paper in America. The name of this paper is "Scandinaven". In 1889 two other papers appeared which have also lived to this day and become widely circulated and influential journals, The Minneapolis Tidende (Minneapolis Times), published in Minneapolis, and Washington Posten (The Washington Post), published in Seattle, Wash. Another very important Norwegian paper is the Decorah Posten which appeared in 1874 in Decorah, Iowa, and has a wide circle of readers. A large number of other Norwegian papers, some of them merely local, others national in their circulation, might be mentioned but space does not permit. In all there are some over a hundred Norwegian papers published in the United States and Canada. The Chicago Daily News is the most widely circulated

and best known of the newspapers published by Norwegians in English. Victor F. Lawson (Larson) is the son of a Norwegian immigrant, Iver Larson, who was associated with John Anderson in the founding and publishing of Scandinaven. A number of religious and social denominational organs are also published and have a very wide circulation. The largest and most widely circulated are the Lutheranerens (The Lutheran) and Lutheran Church Herald, published by the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, and Folkebladet (The People Paper), published by the Norwegian Lutheran Free Church.

Quite a large number of Norwegian Americans have become well known writers of fiction both in Norwegian and English as well as authors of many historical and technical works. Gustav Melby and O. A. Buslet and Julius Baumann are noted for their poetry, Mr. Melby in English and the other two in Norwegian. Vilhelm Ager and O. E. Rolvaag, professor of Norwegian at St. Olaf College, and N. N. Ronning, editor of Familien's Magazin, and The Friend, are writers of fiction. H. H. Boyesen has written an excellent history of Norway in the English language, Prof. R. B. Anderson has written several books on the Norwegians and their history in this country as well as on their mythology and has contributed articles to a number of reference books. Prof. G. T. Flom has also written quite extensively on the history of Norwegians in this country. Space does not permit even mention of the large number of

*Review  
Gustav  
H. H. Boyesen  
and the  
J. Zealand*

writers of Norwegian descent who have written books and contributed articles to many cyclopedias and periodicals in both English and Norwegian.

The Norwegian immigrants and their descendants in America have, as a rule, remained faithful to the Lutheran Church, the Church of their native land. For several years the early settlers were without pastoral care, the first pastors being ordained in 1843. The first church was built at Muskego in 1843 and completed and dedicated in 1845. This pioneer church is now located on the grounds of the Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul. Elling Eielsen, a lay preacher from Norway, came to this country in 1839 and settled on the Fox River settlement. Here he built a log house the second story of which served as a meeting place for religious services. This was the first religious meeting house built in America by Norwegians, being built in 1842. The first church body, known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, was organized in 1846. The next one, the Synod of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, was organized in 1851. In 1860 the Norwegians and Swedes together organized the Augustana Synod. Nine years later the Norwegians withdrew and organized the Norwegian Augustana Synod. Two other Norwegian Lutheran bodies, a Danish Norwegian Conference and the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood, were formed later. In 1890 the Norwegian Augustana Synod, the Conference, and the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood united to form the United Lutheran Church of America. Three years later a number of pastors and congregations withdrew from the United

Lutheran Church and formed the Norwegian Free Church. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, whose name was changed to Hauge's Evangelical Norwegian Lutheran Church in 1876, the Norwegian Synod, and the United church were merged into one large body in 1917. This is the largest organization of Norwegian Lutherans in America, having a total membership of 500,000 souls belonging to 3,000 different congregations. The value of the Church property of these congregations, including churches, parsonages, and real estate aggregate \$30,000,000. The church body known as the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America alone, as a corporate body, owns property valued at \$8,000,000. Adding to these amounts a property value of the other Norwegian Lutheran bodies and the Norwegians belonging to other religious denominations, the total property value would be at least \$50,000,000, showing that the Norwegians in America have performed a gigantic task in producing and appropriating this vast wealth to their church activities alone.

From the very first the Norwegian immigrants were interested in education. This was natural enough since they came from a people having practically no illiteracy. The first attempt at establishing a school was in 1855, a school being opened near Lisbon, Ill. It was in session, however, only one winter. In 1860 the Swedes and Norwegians jointly established a school in Chicago. This was moved to Paxton, Ill., three years later and finally to Rock Island, Ill., and is at present the college and Theological Seminary of the Swedish Augustana Synod. In 1869

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a school was established at Marshall, Wis. It was moved to Minneapolis in 1872. This institution, the Augsburg Seminary, is the College and Theological Seminary of the Norwegian Free Church. Another educational institution was opened at Half Way Creek Parsonage, Rock Prairie, Wis., 1861, with two teachers and 11 pupils. The following year it was moved to Decorah, Iowa, becoming the present Luther College. St. Olaf College, the largest college of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, was founded in 1874 at Northfield, Minn. Luther Seminary, the Theological Seminary of the Norwegian Synod, was founded in Madison, Wis., in 1876 and moved to Robbinsdale near Minneapolis in 1887. It was later removed to St. Paul. Augsburg Seminary was the Theological Seminary of the United Lutheran Church until 1893 when the split occurred, which resulted in the Lutheran Free Church, at which time the United Church established its own Seminary in Minneapolis. It was later removed to St. Paul. The early efforts of establishing a school in Hauge's Synod, first at Lisbon, later in Chicago, finally resulted in the establishment of Red Wing Seminary at Red Wing, Minn., in 1879. This institution became the College and Theological Seminary of Hauge's Synod. The amalgamation of the three bodies in 1917 brought about the consolidation of their three Theological Seminaries into one, Luther Theological Seminary which is now located in St. Paul. Altogether the Norwegian Lutherans in this country have established four Theological Seminaries, five colleges, two normal schools, two Ladies' Seminaries,

two Bible schools, and 26 academies. Twenty of these institutions belong to the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, one being a Theological Seminary, four being colleges, two normal schools, and the remainder academies or junior colleges. Two of these schools are located in Canada. The total student enrollment of these institutions is nearly 5,000.

In addition to work in the institutions founded and maintained by the various churches, Norwegian teachers are found in large numbers in our public schools, state normal schools, and universities as well as various denominational and private schools of various kinds.

It thus appears that the Norwegians have many large and important achievements to their credit in industrial, civil, literary, religious, and educational lines during their hundred years of migration and settlement, struggle, and accomplishment in this country. The Norwegian American may, therefore, look with pride upon the century's achievements and command the honor and respect of his fellow Americans together with whom he has labored, sacrificed, and achieved to bring about the greatest, wealthiest, and happiest nation on earth.