

# The Norwegian-American Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota

Number Thirty

November, 1953

## News Letter

FROM THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE  
TO THE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS



OLAF HALVORSON  
Born August 1, 1872  
Died August 3, 1953

A singularly adventurous and benevolent life came to a close when Dr. Olaf Halvorson of Huntington Park, California, passed away August 8, 1953. Born August 1, 1872, his life span was eighty-one years and seven days.

In 1894 Mr. Halvorson emigrated to the United States after he had completed the course of study offered by Storm Real Gymnasium in Stavanger, Norway. He continued his education at Valparaiso University for two years and then matriculated at the University of Minnesota where he majored in languages, with Spanish as his favorite language. He taught Spanish in high schools, first in Arizona and later in Los Angeles, California, until he qualified for retirement as a teacher in 1936.

Shortly after locating in Los Angeles he bought a tract of land for an orange grove. About the time the orange trees were to begin bearing fruit, oil was discovered on his property.

This sudden change in the economic situation did not upset Mr. Halvorson. He remained the same calm, considerate, friendly person of preceding years when the family had to exercise care lest the outlay might exceed the income of a high school teacher.

In addition to the original ten acre orange grove, hundreds of acres of orange and walnut groves were acquired; real estate holdings in Los Angeles and suburbs increased in number as the years passed by; bank stocks accumulated, resulting in his appointment as a bank director.

Mr. Halvorson devoted much time and financial support to charitable, cultural and religious interests. He served as member of the Board for the Solheim Home for the Aged at Eagle Rock, California; of the South East YMCA; member of the national board of directors of American Relief for Norway, Inc.; president of the Southern California chapter of Camp Little Norway; chairman of the Southern California chapter of Nordmanns-Forbundet. He was a member of Sons of Norway; a Life member of The Norwegian-American Historical Association; an associate member of the local Nordmennes Sangforening; a member of Our Savior's Lutheran church.

In recognition of his outstanding work in the various areas mentioned, His Majesty Haakon VII named Mr. Halvorson a Knight of the Order of St. Olav, 1st class. Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, also honored him by conferring upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

Besides Sofie, his wife, Olaf Halvorson leaves two sons, Morgan and Homer, and a daughter, Borghild. Morgan was for some time chemist with the Shell Company, but has for a number of years been assisting his father in the management of his large business interests. Homer is Librarian at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md. Borghild, the only daughter, is at home with her mother at 6603 Marconi Street, Huntington Park, California.

### A TRIBUTE TO OLAF HALVORSON

By Kenneth Bjork

The death of our friend and past president, Olaf Halvorson, can only be described as a severe blow to the Norwegian-American Historical Association; for over the years we have come to think of him as a pillar of strength and a wise counsellor to whom we could turn at all times. Men like Halvorson, who have planted the imprint of their personalities so unmistakably on the record of the Association, simply can not be replaced. We can only mourn his passing and extend our heartfelt sympathies to his widow and children.

Mr. Halvorson served the Association as its President from January, 1942, until January, 1951, when he found it necessary because of ill health to be relieved of active duties.

He thus served as President during the difficult period of World War II, the transition from war to peace, and the resumption of normal Association activities. Throughout this period he showed great devotion to duty, many times making the long trip from California to the Middle West for meetings with the Editor, the Executive Board, and the Membership of our organization.

Through unfailing encouragement, frequent prod-



dings, and enlistment of the support of others—especially in the West—he fathered the current project of writing the history of Norwegian settlement on the American Pacific coast. When the story of Norwegians in this area has been fully told and another segment of the Norwegian-American saga has thus been fitted into the ever-growing mosaic of history that the Association has been creating, no small share of the credit will be due this very modest man who served so long and so well as our President.

On various occasions and for various purposes, Mr. Halvorson generously befriended the Association with money gifts. His benefactions, in fact, were largest among the many financial contributions that he and other like-minded men have made to our society. His gifts were always accompanied by quiet good nature, shrewd advice, and unaffected humility of spirit. From time to time the officers of the Association have sensed, and occasionally they have given expression to the thought, that in Olaf Halvorson were the simplicity of nature and the directness of purpose that are the measure of true greatness.

Like Birger Osland, our past Treasurer, Mr. Halvorson, made the "long pull from Stavanger" to the shores of America. He represented in his thinking and in his actions the realism of the pioneers; at the same time he symbolized their quiet romanticism and idealism. He expressed in his whole being the faith of those who struck out new paths in the wilderness, who felled forests and plowed the prairies, who gave their time and talents freely to an adventure of the spirit in preserving for posterity the story of our forbears.

For all work well done, for all generous support and encouragement, for long and unselfish service, for good comradeship, for a clear view of the goal ahead and a steady course to reach it, the Association's officers who were Mr. Halvorson's co-workers say: "Many thanks! You will be missed beyond words, but your spirit will inspire us in the days that lie ahead."

## NEW MEMBERS since December 1952

### LIFE—

Finn C. Olsen, Dearborn, Michigan.  
John T. Olsen, Milan, Michigan.

### SUSTAINING—

R. W. Reiersen, Houston, Texas.  
Mrs. John Xan, Birmingham, Alabama.  
Elsie M. Melby, Duluth, Minnesota.  
Kristoffer Oddsen, Chicago, Illinois.

### ASSOCIATE—

Arthur C. Naleid, Racine, Wis.  
William M. Deetz, South Wayne, Wisconsin.  
Jennie Alvild Johnson, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Olaf H. Spetland, Madison, Wisconsin.  
Pastor Alvon Nelson, Denver, Colorado.  
Mrs. Norma A. Palmer, Mauston, Wisconsin.  
Sigmund Kvaløy, Skreia, Norway.  
Dr. C. A. Hauberg, Northfield, Minnesota.  
Truman H. Risa, Chicago, Illinois.

### RENEWAL—

George H. Ellingson, Northfield, Minnesota.

## FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

The tenth triennial meeting of the Norwegian-American Historical Association will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Saturday, May 8, 1954. Particulars about time of day and place where sessions are to be held will be announced later.

\* \* \* \*

The second printing, 1,000 copies, of Miss Aagot Raaen's book, *Grass of the Earth*, has been sold out. We wish to ask our members to have this fact in mind when you plan your gifts for Christmas. Fortunately we still have a supply of the other books published by the Association. Any of these books would make very welcome presents to your friends. Turn to page 171 in *Studies and Records*, Volume XVII, and you will find a complete list of our books with a comprehensive table of contents.

\* \* \* \*

Some of our members enroll new members at quite regular intervals. Who will join this volunteer band of Association builders? The Executive Board has decided that members who are enrolled during the months of October, November and December will be credited as paid up members for the following calendar year.

\* \* \* \*

Dr. Einar Haugen, member of the N.A.H.A. Board of Editors, has thru the University of Pennsylvania Press published *The Norwegian Language in America—a Study in Bilingual Behaviour*. This is a two volume work of 700 pages. Chapter nine of this publication was printed in *Studies and Records*, Vol. 17, under the title *The Struggle Over Norwegian*.

\* \* \* \*

A live interest in the objectives of the Norwegian-American Historical Association on the part of educators and publishers in Norway is becoming a reality. In the late 1940s Mrs. Ingrid Semmingsen spent a year in the United States doing research in the migration of Norwegians to America. The result of her research study was two volumes on the emigration from Norway to the U. S. On the basis of her second book she was granted the degree of Ph.D. by the University of Norway. The title of her two books is *Veien mot vest— I, II (The Westward Way)*.

Dr. Semmingsen has been asked by the board of directors of Nordmanns-Forbundet, Oslo, to act as Managing Editor of a series of small volumes dealing with Norwegian-American History. These publications will be known as *Nordmanns-Forbundets Smaaskriftserie*. Two of these small volumes have been published. No. 1 bears the title *Utvandringen og Det utflyttede Norge (The Emigration and The Norway That Has Moved Away)*. No. 2 contains a collection of America-letters that were written by emigrants from Agder, a southern district in Norway. Dr. Semmingsen has collaborated with Superintendent of Schools Tolv Aamlund in editing this volume. It seems reasonable to assume that publications of this type will stimulate interest in letters from America that are stored away in attic trunks and boxes which will provide material for further research.