

Only July 4, 1825, a small 39-ton boat, the Sloop "Restaurationen" set sail from Stavanger, Norway, with 52 passengers on board, bound for America. They arrived at New York, October 9, after a passage of 14 weeks, with 53 people on board, a baby girl having been born to Lars Larson, the leader of the party, and his wife. This was not the first coming of the Norwegians to America; far from it. The Norwegians were the first Europeans to set foot on American soil, having come to Greenland in 876, 900 years before the Declaration of Independence. They came to Vinland under Leif Erikson in 1000 and kept up intercourse with America until 1476, the year before Columbus went to Iceland. They came to America also during the Colonial Period, as in the case of Jens Munk, who, under Danish colors, tried to discover the Northwest Passage, which later, in 1912, was eventually discovered by another Norwegian, Roald Amundsen, the discoverer of the South Pole; and, as in the case of J. A. Vanderbilt, the ancestor of the Vanderbilts, Feb. 6, 1650-

South Pole; and, as in the case of Anneken Hendricks, who owned Wall Street, New York, and married J. A. Vanderbilt, the ancestor of the Vanderbilts, Feb. 6, 1650. The coming of the Sloop "Restaurationen", often called the Norwegian "Mayflower", is important because it marks the beginning of the modern tide of immigration from Norway to America. During the century, 1825-1925, approximately 750,000 Norwegians have come to this land, and Norway has, as the United States Immigration Commission notes in its report, giving a survey of immigration from 1820 to 1910, "sent a larger per cent of its population to America than any other country excepting Ireland". A careful and scientific estimate of the Norwegians of all generations in America in 1925 places the total at 2,500,000, about 2 per cent of the population of the United States. The Norwegian element in the United States is as large as the population of Minnesota, the strongest Norwegian state. The Norwegian contribution to the making of the United States is no doubt as much as the state of Minnesota. The Norse-American Centennial which was held at St. Paul, and various other places, aimed to commemorate the coming of the Sloopers and their forerunner, Oleng Pearson, besides paying fitting tribute to the Norwegian pioneers who have for a whole century been toiling faithfully, especially as farmers, in the making of this nation.

The main celebration was held at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds, St. Paul, on June 6-9, 1925, while other celebrations <sup>occurred</sup> here and there throughout the United States and Canada and even Norway itself. New York, Chicago and Seattle were some of the larger cities that put on elaborate festivals. Kendall, Orleans Co., N. Y., being the first and oldest settlement of the Sloopers, had a celebration, and Ottawa, LaSalle Co., Ill., had a Homecoming of the Sloopers. La Salle is the second settlement of the Sloopers in point of time and still the home of several hundred of them. The little band of 53 that came in 1825 had increased to over 1,000, located in more than 20 states and engaged in almost every kind of honorable work. Most of them are farmers. At least one is a millionaire. In 100 years not one of them is known to have been in jail, or to have been fed by public charity. At the La Salle Homecoming a Society of Sloopers was organized, with the object of writing the history and preserving some of the precious heritage of the Sloopers as a group and each family thereof in particular.

The initiative for the St. Paul centennial celebration was taken by a delegate convention of the Norwegian "bygdelag", societies of a social and historical character, each "lag" representing the immigrants from some "bygd", or district, in Norway, and their descendants of American birth. A Central Committee was appointed, with power to organize and carry out plans for a national celebration. The president of this Committee was Gisle Bothme; the vice presidents, N. T. Moen and A. G. Plean; the secretary, J. A. Holvik; the treasurer, Trygve Oas;

the counsel, A. Ueland; the managing director, S. H. Holstad. A number of departmental committees were appointed, such as; Program, with B. E. Bergesen as chairman; Budget, with Jes. G. Nerby as chairman; Finance, with E. G. Quasme as chairman; Transportation, with O. P. E. Jacobson as chairman; Exhibits, with Knut Gjerset as chairman; Women's Auxiliary, with Elisa P. Farseth as chairman, etc. A number of state and county committees was also organized, with a working membership of about 4000 experts. A four days' program was prepared and an exposition showing the material and cultural progress of the Norwegians during the years 1825-1925. The exhibits took on the dimensions of a state fair, and, in some respects, even a national or world's fair, and included objects, models, pictures, drawings, statistical tables, charts, maps, relics and works of art and science. The life of the Norwegians in their homes, church life, educational work, industries, sports, charities, missions, public and professional service, was pictured. The many institutions which they have built; the great men and women they have reared; their contributions to music, painting, sculpture, literature, journalism, engineering, architecture, women's arts and crafts, and a thousand and one other things, were set forth in this exposition. And, as to the program, there were four gala days with the greatest variety of orations, sermons, songs, instrumental music, athletic contests, feasting and social intercourse, never to be forgotten by those in attendance. The attendance was about 250,000 on the last three days. No record was kept of the attendance the first day, at which ~~the~~ 46 "lags" held ~~the~~ conventions. The vast crowds were as orderly as at church—there was not one arrest, not one drunk.

The state of Minnesota, as well as other states, gave the celebration official recognition. Six of the ~~46~~ <sup>state</sup> governors, by the way, were of Norwegian birth or descent and took part in the program; also four of our U. S. senators and eleven congressmen were of Norwegian stock. They were there. And many other dignitaries—illustrious representatives from Norway, Iceland, Canada and the United States. Congress had authorized the issuing of 2,000,000 Horse American Centennial two-cent stamps and five-cent stamps and the striking of a medal in silver for the occasion. This medal has on the front side the picture of a viking and the dates 1825-1925 and on the back side the picture of a viking ship and the date A.D. 1000, the year in which Leif Eriksen came to America. Congress has thus gone on record as saying that the Norwegians came to America 500 years before Columbus. Chief among the speakers at the St. Paul celebration was the President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge. He recognized the need of studying the racial elements in America and gave the Norwegians high tribute as being good American citizens. He said in part: "Our America with all that it represents of hope in the world is now and will be what you make it. Its institutions of religious liberty, of educational and economic opportunity, of constitutional rights, of the integrity of the law, are the most precious possessions of the human race. These do not emanate from the government. They come from the consecration of the father, the love of the mother, and the devotion of the children. They are the product of that honest, earnest and tireless effort that goes into the sowing of the family altar and the making of a home of our country. They can have no stronger supporters, no more loyal defenders, than that great body of our citizenship which you represent. When I look upon you and realize what you are and what you have done, I know that in your hands our country is secure. You have laid up your treasure in what America represents, and there will your heart be also. You have given your pledge to the land of the free. The pledge of the Norwegian people has never yet gone unredeemed".

The Norwegian Lutheran synods were, of course, well represented at the St. Paul festivities, even as they have been the chief guides in guiding the destinies of the Norwegian people in America. The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, for example, had its own Centennial Committee, which, according to instructions, had made provision for the universal and simultaneous celebration of the centennial in all the parishes of the Norwegian Lutheran Church throughout the United States and

Canada, had printed a centennial service program and secured the production of a centennial cantata, and had provided for the publication of a scholarly, comprehensive and authoritative history of the Norwegian people in America. These publications were issued by the Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, one of the great Norwegian-American institutions, the largest Norwegian publishing house in the world.

The results of the celebration are manifold and of great consequence. The Norwegian-Americans, by taking stock of their past, will better understand their heritage, will better appreciate their pioneer fathers, will get a more just recognition from their American neighbors, and will be better able to face the future.