



Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

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Issue 2

Brief History of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Lengby, MN

By Luverne Lomen

Editors note: Mr. Lomen has assembled a nice collection of materials concerning the congregation, which are now in the Synod archives.

The site for the Immanuel Norsk-Evangelisk Luthersk Menighed at Lengby, approximately one acre, was purchased on Jan 10th, 1924 by the trustees Ole J. Lomen, David Carlson and Nels Hultberg from Gunsten Stenson and Inger Stenson, his wife, for the sum of one hundred dollars. (Gunsten Stenson being the son-in-law of Ole J. Lomen.) This information was taken from the warranty deed currently in the possession of St. Paul Lutheran, Lengby. Ole J. Lomen and Nels Hultberg are both buried in the cemetery but David Carlson is not and no further information is found on him in church records.



What remained of Immanuel church in 1994

The need for this church arose after the “merger” or union of the Norwegian Synod of which the St. Paul congregation was a member with the United Church and the Hauge Synod in 1917. This is referred to in Valborg Nesseth’s writing on the life and times of Gut-torm Nesseth.¹ A majority of the St. Paul congregation voted to accept the merger. The minority with Pastor Nesseth left St. Paul.

No record was found as to when the church building was built, however a five-page hand-written obituary of Knud A. Helle by Rev. G. P. Nesseth indicates that in 1923 when Helle’s son Aanon died, he was buried in the St. Paul cemetery. This would suggest that no activity had taken place in what is now Immanuel cemetery before the land was purchased in 1924.

The Immanuel church building consisted of a wooden clapboard building 16 x 24 feet with a 9-foot eave and a steep pitched roof which made a higher ceiling. There were 3 windows on each side and a single entry/exit door facing east toward the road. The roof appears to have been covered with roll roofing asphalt. The interior of the building was covered both walls and ceiling by tongue and groove car siding with no insulation in the walls or ceiling. The building sat up on a poured wall basement with windows for light to the basement. Arnold Lomen remembers his father telling him about green poplar cobs

¹ See *Oak Leaves* Vol. 6 No. 1, July 2002.

that were cut just shorter than the thickness of the poured walls and laid in rows between layers of the cement. This was for insulation purposes and lessened the amount of cement needed, much of which was lime, since cement was scarce. Access to the basement was by outside cement steps that had a covered sloped door with a lift handle common to that period. The basement was where the heating system was located and wood was stored. I think this was a barrel stove with a heat grate in the floor, but am not positive. There was quite likely a cement floor in the basement. The building was located on the southwest corner of the property with the cemetery lots laid out to the north and east. In the sanctuary there were about 5 small pews on each side with a middle aisle. Five of the handmade painted pews are still in use in the basement of St. Paul Lutheran church in Lengby. They measure in width from 70 inches to 72 inches. The backs of these pews are also made of car siding that makes them more attractive than plain boards.

The earliest gravestone in Immanuel cemetery is that of Knud A. Helle with date of death of Feb. 4, 1930. Since he is the only member of that family past or current involved with the church this writer was curious about him. Further information, from the same handwritten obituary, tells that Mr. Helle was born Aug. 15, 1846 in Saltisdalen, Norway. During his life he had been a teacher both in Norway and the U. S. After living various places Mr. Helle lived near and in Macintosh and only moved from there to Lengby to live with his oldest daughter, married to Andrew Enger, in the fall of 1922 after his 2nd wife died. His first wife is also buried near Macintosh. His one remaining granddaughter, Thelma Olson Laines, told this writer that he was a carpenter also and had a carpenter shop on the southwest end of the main street in Lengby for a while. She remembers Rev. Nesseth visiting her grandfather regularly and discussing and reading the Bible. Her recollection is that it was he who built the Immanuel church how-

ever he would have been almost 79 years old at that time. It seems more likely that there were several volunteers assisting with the building.

This writer has limited memory of the Immanuel church. A few things stand out in my mind. One was Gullick Jaastad, a retired accountant from the Clearbrook area who I believe was the treasurer. He had a strong voice and led the singing even after we reunited with St. Paul. I also remember going to the Fridhem Sunday School because we did not have one. That, as I remember, was about the same time as services in Immanuel so we missed the services when we attended Sunday School or came in near the end. When the weather was nice we would sit outside and wait. There were only two of us for some time: Arnold Lomen and myself, later there was Arnie's younger sister, Marlys and my sister, Marion.

HOW THE PARSONAGE WAS BUILT

Money was in short supply for both Immanuel and St. Paul congregations and the reuniting of the two congregations did not immediately help the treasury that much. Voting to build a parsonage was largely a leap of faith.

About the only resource that Immanuel could bring was a small amount that was its share from the sale of the parsonage in Bagley. This also may have been the source of the \$2,000.00 interest-free loan that was received from the Concordia congregation.

It is interesting to note that a loan was secured from Mr. Ole Kittelson, a bachelor, who owned a farm a couple miles east of the Lengby junction. Ole was a long time member, possibly a charter member, though now mostly inactive. The loan and the actual amount are not even mentioned in the minutes of the St. Paul congregation but I remember that when the loan was received, my father, the treasurer, expressed relief. The church board at that time consisted of Soren Sultvedt, Albert Leite, Don Hood, Arthur Erickson,

Walter Wandschneider, secretary, Louis Lomen, treasurer, and Reverend Moldstad. Concordia loaned \$21,000, interest-free as mentioned in the written loan agreement. In speaking with Don Hood, a board member of that time, he told me the amount of the loan from Mr. Kittelson was \$6,000.

It is not remembered how long it took to repay the loan to Mr. Kittelson but as the amount whittled down he was again approached to forgive part of the loan as a gift to the church. This he did and if my memory serves me correctly that amount was \$2,000. Don Hood told me that there was an annual loan payment due to Mr. Kittelson, but that most of the years if not all Mr. Kittelson forgave the amount of the payment.

The actual building of the parsonage was with a lot of volunteer labor. William Stave, a carpenter and member of the congregation, was the only paid worker. He was able to keep the construction going and direct the labor of the volunteers.

The lot where the parsonage was to be built, already church property, was a side hill with a slough hole in the southeast corner. Arvid Hoge with a bulldozer was hired and the hill was landscaped as we see it today and the slough was filled in. There was concern about building on the fill but the area of the house had very little fill and the basement was on solid settled ground. Don Hood recounted one small mishap during construction. This was during work on the basement where the walls were being put up with concrete blocks. Art Swanson, a block layer, had completed a couple walls and went home for lunch. Some of the members began to backfill too quickly before the Walls set up resulting in one of the walls caving in and having to be rebuilt.



Lengby, Minnesota

A LETTER FROM PASTOR JOHN MOLDSTAD

Dear Luverne,

I'm finally getting down to sending you my recollections and observations on the merger of Immanuel and St. Paul congregations in Lengby.

I am convinced that if it hadn't been for one Ole J. Lomen and his son, Louis, there would no longer be a synod congregation in Lengby or one at Ebro Corner (Our Saviour's) either for that matter. You can be proud of what your grandfather and father accomplished. Of course, the Lord was behind it all!

Certain background material is necessary for understanding the above paragraph.

1. If it hadn't been for Ole J. Lomen ("Muley" Lomen he was known as, to distinguish him from another Ole Lomen, who wore a beard and was known as "Shegge" Lomen therefor,—your grandfather drove his wagon behind a mule, hence, the name)—as I started to say, if it hadn't been for "Muley" Lomen, standing by the side of his faithful "missionary" Pastor, G. P. Nesseth, at the time of the Merger (from 1918-1920) there would have been no Immanuel Lutheran in Lengby. Valborg Nesseth, Pastor Nesseth's daughter, has correctly given you that information. What took place when St. Paul's decided to enter the unionistic merger of the old Norwegian Synod, the United Lutheran Church, and the Hauge Synod.

2. At the time that I arrived on the scene, Immanuel, Concordia, a group meeting in a schoolhouse south of Ebro, about 4 miles, and a little congregation of six families several miles east and a little north of Clearbrook, called Clearwater Lutheran Church, comprised the parish I was called to. I lived in Bagley in a home which had been purchased for \$3,000. (I even had to purchase my own "heater" for the house since there was no furnace.) The membership of Immanuel's was 20 or 21 souls, counting children, at that time.

3. Pastor U. L. Larson had served most of these congregations as well as Cross Lake

congregation and one in Trail, called Chester Lutheran Church. He had been subsidized by our synod's Mission Board for years, getting into so many arguments with the Board, that they finally called Rev. J. B. Unseth, 70 years old, to take Clearwater, Concordia, Immanuel, the group in the schoolhouse south of Ebro, and to start a congregation in Bagley, hoping that the Missouri Synod congregation would join his church in Bagley instead of starting their own in Bagley.

4. Unseth served until he was 75 years old, holding services in his own house in Bagley, since the Missouri group in Bagley didn't want a man as old as Unseth to build the mission in town. Each year the Mission Board wanted to reduce the subsidy for the parish. The last year he was there, Pastor Unseth told me he took "the cut in salary" himself and didn't even bring it up to the parish.

5. In September 1951 I was ordained and installed at Concordia in a joint service for Concordia, Immanuel, Clearwater and south of Ebro Churches. My salary was:

Concordia:	\$29.10/mo.	(\$350/yr.)
Immanuel:	16.67/mo.	(\$200/yr.)
Clearwater:	6.25/mo.	(\$ 75/yr.)
Ebro group:	6.25/mo.	(\$ 75/yr.)
Mission Bd.:	106.67/mo.	(\$1280/yr.)

(I have listed the salaries per month down to the penny to show how they all counted their pennies.)

6. I was on the faculty at Bethany College after I graduated from the Seminary in 1950. At the Synod Convention in 1951 the Mission Board had a special meeting to consider someone for the Bagley parish, since they wanted Unseth to retire. (He told me he didn't want to, but had to agree.) While standing in the meal line at the convention, two of the Mission Board members (Rev. Hans Theiste and "Doc" Wilson the chairman of the Board) clapped me on the back and said: "*You can thank us for not putting you on the call list for Bagley. That's no place for a beginner! We've had nothing but trouble with that parish. And each year it is costing us more and more to keep it open, with the membership on the way down!*" Rev. Larson had apparently portrayed

the members of the congregations over the years as backward in their thinking, stubborn and many other adjectives.

7. Two months later the parish called me anyway, without the Mission Board's blessing. At the General Pastors Conference several pastors told me they felt sorry for me. Even a member of the Mission Board said: "*Don't worry, John, we'll let you stay up there for one year and if it doesn't really improve, we'll get you out of there and find a different call for you.*" One pastor, however, surprised me by saying: "*I'm glad you are going to Bagley.*" But then added: "*All of us pastors owe you a debt of gratitude, because otherwise they might have called one of us and our congregation might have voted that we should accept the call.*" Such was the feeling among the Mission Board and many of the pastors.

8. I have given you this background information so that you can better understand the pressure that the parish and I were under. We had to show some kind of progress.

9. My work began in September of 1951. I had 4 places to conduct services. I had services every other Sunday in each of the "congregations." Contributions were not much. (People didn't have much in those days.) The average family gave between fifty cents and one dollar each time they went to church. Some kind of action had to take place. Five months after beginning my work in the parish, I bought the old Congregational Church building in Bagley. It cost me \$500. That left me with \$15 in my savings account. The Mission Board later sent me a check for the \$500. Then we needed land to move it to. Many years earlier there had been a church at the Ebro Corner called Clearwater Ev. Luth. Menighet. It had long since passed out of existence. There was a cemetery on 4 acres of land where the old church had stood. I went to the Clearwater County Attorney, a Mr. Lewis, and he said nobody owns it, since the church had disbanded so many years ago. I told him "*But I want to buy it.*" "*You can't*" he said, because nobody owns it. "*Just take it*" he said. "*Move*

your church out there and after many years go to court and sue for 'An Apparent Title' which in your case will be better than anyone would have. Just don't tell anybody about it. Everyone will think you own it and after you get the Apparent Title no one else can claim the land." So, we moved the church to its present site. Then, we had to organize the Ebro group, electing officers and Trustees, etc. The church began to grow in its new quarters, and was able to raise the salary to \$40 per month. At the same time, July of 1952, I announced to the congregation at Clearwater that I would no longer be serving them. Then, with only three congregations in the parish I was able to have services in each church every Sunday. Contributions doubled, because attendance was better and people for the most part still gave their Dollar each time they went to church. The Mission Board was pleased. But it wasn't enough. We were still heavily dependent upon the Mission Board.

This, then, is the background information you need to understand how important the role that Louis Lomen played was for the parish. Almost every Sunday Louis would say the same refrain *"I was up town talking to Conrad Molstad (no relation to me) and he said: 'We ought to put these two churches together.'" I told him I was willing, but could take no action. I couldn't come into St. Paul's and force myself on them. Time and again Louis would bring the matter up to the point where I was getting a little impatient with him. At this time St. Paul's was having services every other Sunday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. The pastor, O. M. Bratlie, who had Hope Lutheran in Fosston and one or two other churches around Fosston had announced that he didn't want to serve them anymore. So, I finally said to Louis, "I'm tired of your bringing this Conrad Molstad business up to me all the time. Tell you what, you bring him to my house in Bagley tomorrow morning or we'll forget the whole thing."* I told my wife, Gudrun, *"It will never happen. But just in case it does, be sure to have the coffee pot on and some cookies."*

To my surprise here was Conrad Molstad and Louis with a big smile on his face. Conrad and I hit it off right away. The outcome of the meeting was that Conrad was going to have Gudrun and me come to the next Ladies Aid meeting at St. Paul's and offer to bring my little Immanuel church to hold services in their St. Paul's building.

At the meeting the members of the Ladies Aid were there but also about ten or twelve men. The President of the Aid asked Gudrun (who was a good organist) and me to sing a duet. And then I was up front with them about my being there, about my meeting with Conrad, about his meeting with two or three of the trustees individually getting their o.k., etc. I decided to be completely up front with them, telling them that I would like to see our little Immanuel merge with St. Paul's some day. I said, *"We know that Immanuel split off from St. Paul's years ago over doctrine and that many unkind words on both sides have been spoken. But I will tell you this: If you ask me to hold our services in your church here, I will do my level best to make you my members."* I saw smiles on the faces of the ladies. Not on all the men. But in a matter like this the ladies have a lot of influence. My proposal was: You really don't know us as a church. How about it if we hold our services in your church, morning services every Sunday. We'll pay you rent. And we will hope that you, of course, will all attend. Then after you feel you know where we stand on God's Word and our practice, you can later decide if you want to continue the arrangement, or better yet, merge these two congregations. I thought all was going well until a Mrs. Pechacek stood up and said, *"How will the ELC like this?"* I thought I might as well be straightforward. I said, *"They'll be hoppin' mad. But what do you care. They don't want to serve you anyway."* "Well," she said *"I thank you for your frankness."* And that was the end of that. She and her husband, who had been raised Catholic, were in church every Sunday after that.

They said, we won't charge you any rent. You can have the offerings, but you can then pay Norman Jorstad, our janitor, \$15.00 per month as his salary. They also agreed that the "Mission offerings" should go to our synod, since that is the synod sponsoring the work here.

It was agreed that I would be paid \$100 per month. With the \$40 per month that Our Savior's was paying and the \$60 per month from Concordia we could tell the Mission Board that we no longer needed their support and were grateful for all their help over these many years.

It seems that much of this account concerns money. No surprise!

That was the challenge on the part of the Mission Board: That we should become self-supporting. And interestingly enough, the synod has received much more in contributions that it had spent in keeping the parish in existence. Incidentally, merging Immanuel and St. Paul's is the only case in our synod that I know of where congregations that split in 1918 got back together again.

There is a sequel to this story. Pastor Larsen had passed away a few weeks before I had started at Immanuel. He had been serving Cross Lake and Chester congregations. (He received \$200 each from those churches. And so, he had to support his family of ten children by purchasing an old farm which was two miles west and one mile north of the Ebro Corner. He raised most of his own food and had wood-cutters come in and cut trees which he sold at the market.) Since those two little congregations couldn't support a pastor alone, and since the Mission Board was not going to put any more money into that parish, the congregations called me as their pastor. So for two years I had 4 services a Sunday, three in the morning and one in the afternoon (alternating between Cross Lake and Chester.)

The day in May that I was installed at Cross Lake (also for Chester) and at Lengby in the evening, the preacher was the Rev. J. A. O. "Jack" Preus, later to become the

president of the Missouri Synod. As we were standing outside at Cross Lake waiting for the dinner to be served, an older gentleman shook our hands and announced: "*I come to you men as a penitent brother.*" He was the pastor of several congregations north and east of Oklee. He told us that he was going to retire and planned to join our little church in Trail. (We had acquired a small church building 23 miles north of Gully and moved it to Trail and changed the name of the congregation from Chester to Mt. Olive Lutheran.) His name was Hallvard Lie and he had a farm a few miles east of Trail. He had been the pastor of five congregations, was diabetic, and at age 65 was going to retire.

That evening back at Bagley, I asked Rev. Preus and his wife if they would be willing to stay another day, suggesting that he and I call on Pastor Lie at his home. Preus asked why. I said: "*I have a question to ask Pastor Lie: 'We'll be happy to have you in our congregation. But since there is another church in Trail of your own ELC synod, why do you then want to come to our little church? And why not give the congregations you are serving the same opportunity?'*" He had told us that he was coming to us for doctrinal reasons, and wanted to leave the ELC.

So, the next day we went to see Lie, the question was put to him, and a meeting was arranged with the 15 trustees of his parish (three from each church.) The names of the churches that he was serving: Ebenezer, another Clearwater, Oak Park, Nazareth, and Little Oak. Little Oak did not have a church building yet, later merging with Nazareth. There were over 650 members in these five churches. Pastor Lie asked me to propose something to these congregations. Having recently gone through the merging of Immanuel with St. Paul's, I was bold to suggest to these 15 men that they call my brother-in-law, Wilhelm Petersen, who was just finishing our Seminary, for a year to serve them together with Pastor Lie, and then after a year decide whether to have him continue as their pastor

and join our synod, or not. Ebenezer congregation declined to stay in the parish after the year was over. The others called Petersen, (later the President of our Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota) to be their pastor, forming a parish at that time of about 450 souls.

If it hadn't been for "Muley" Lomen and later his son, Louis, that installation service at Cross Lake would no doubt have never taken place, our meeting the next day with Pastor Lie wouldn't have happened and what we now call the "Oklee Parish" would not be in our synod.

TO GOD ALONE THE GLORY

To the best of my recollection these are the members who were in Immanuel when I began serving them in the fall of 1951:

Louis and Esther Lomen, Luverne, Kenneth and Marian

Olaf and Cora Lomen, Arnold, Marls and an older son whose name I cannot recall and who had moved to Montana I think.

Seems that there was also a little boy named Harold Lomen, but I'm not sure whether he belonged to Olaf or Louis. My guess is that he was the son of Olaf and Cora

Jurgen Lomen

Mr. and Mrs. Hultberg – I had the funeral for their son, Miles, who was killed in the Korean War, although I had never met him. As far as I know, Miles was the only one from our synod who died in that war.

Mr. and Mrs. Gullik Jaastad

Lawrence and Carrie Hoiland, Richard (later the adopted another son)

"Cuddy" Thompson and his mother who lived a couple miles east of Lengby.

John Moldstad, Sr.

Luverne Lomen is a member of the Lengby parish in northern Minnesota. John Moldstad Sr. served as pastor there from 1951 to _____.

Reformation Lectures Commemorate Synod Anniversary

Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary annually sponsor lectures at Reformation time to study and discuss some aspect of Lutheran theology as a part of our Reformation heritage.

This year's lectures focused on "The Legacy of the Norwegian Synod." Three speakers spoke on three early leaders of the Norwegian Synod. Pastor Rolf Preus spoke on his ancestor, Herman Amberg Preus, as a pastor-theologian who treasured justification by grace as the central teaching and this approach. President emeritus George Orvick analyzed the life and writings of Ulrik Vilhelm Koren. Professor Erling Teigen researched the career and writings of Jacob Aall Ottesen and synthesized the work of these three influential figures.

These pioneer pastors represent a host of others who worked very hard in difficult times to establish and support the preaching of the gospel in a Confession Lutheran church body in their new home in America.

Preus, Koren, and Ottesen were pastor-theologians with a deep commitment to the Word of God as correctly expounded in the Lutheran Confessions. They sought to be true to Scripture, to bring the saving Gospel to the immigrants, and to find common faith among other Confessional Lutherans in America.



H. A. Preus



U. V. Koren



J. A. Ottesen

We can learn much from their example and their words, which are slowly being brought to us in English so that we can regain an appreciation of our common Christian heritage of faith.

The lectures are printed each year in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, published by the Seminary. To subscribe and receive a copy, contact them at 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001.

Some Recollections from My Youth and My First Years in America

Part Two of Three

By **Ulrik Vilhelm Koren**

(Original title: *Nogle Erindringer fra min Ungdom og fra min første Tid i Amerika*)
Originally printed in *Symra* (Vol. 1, 1905). Also in Koren's *Samlede Skrifter*. Vol. 4.

Translated by Mark DeGarmeaux

II.

First in September (6th) I traveled from Norway via Kiel and Hamburg to America. Things looked different in Norway at that time than they do now. There was no railroad, no telegraph, and very few steamships. In order to get to Hamburg I had to travel by steamship to Kiel and from there by railroad to Hamburg. From that city so-called coastal steamers [*paketskibe*] regularly went to New York. These were only very small sailing ships, by the way, yet they were conveniently arranged for emigrants.

In Hamburg I got a new experience of what could be offered to people in churches that are called Lutheran. In one of the most-visited churches I heard a preacher who had the reputation of being an eloquent man. The church was large. Several hundred seats were placed around in front of the pulpit. These seats were occupied. Otherwise the church was empty. The text was Eph. 3:13: "Therefore I pray that you do not despair of my troubles, which I suffer for you", etc. (Epistle for the 16th Sunday after Trinity). This glorious text the eloquent preacher wanted to use to teach his listeners: "What we should do when we see so much sorrow in the world, so many poor and sick, so that we cannot enjoy our good days in undisturbed peace." — The theme was something like that, and the Epicurean advice he gave was such that my Lutheran blood boiled over this desecration of the Word.

When I heard a real Christian, yes, true Lutheran Bible reading by another pastor in another church in the afternoon, I had to pour out my heart to him, unknown as he was to me. He did not seem to be surprised. "This is

only what you must expect in this city in these times," he said.

We were then to cross the sea in the little bark called "Rhein". There on board we came to spend not less than eleven weeks during many kinds of experiences.

Besides a couple hundred German emigrants in the middle deck [steerage], there were 30-40 persons in second class of various nationalities, and in first class some very remarkable passengers from Germany, Denmark, and Russia. With several of these I got to see, among other things, in a way that I have seen neither before nor after, how easily the grossest unbelief and the most foolish superstition can be found side by side in one and the same person. The trip was not monotonous and it brought us many experiences. There had been cholera both in Norway and Germany, and we had cholera with us on board, so that we buried not less than 14 bodies at sea.

The trip was so stormy that sometimes for several days in a row we had to "lie ahull", because the sail couldn't be set, and some of the rigging broke and had to be cut off overboard.

We were in the greatest danger when one dark night on account of slipshod steering we ran aground on a sandbank 5-6 miles beyond the rumored Sable Island. On that occasion we got to see different ways of facing mortal danger during the violent riot among the passengers. Since it was low tide when we struck ground, we got afloat again as soon as the water began to rise. Had it been high tide, we would not have been rescued, the captain thought. After we ran aground once more (in the fog, near Long Island) we arrived successfully in New York in November.

The trip west at that time no longer went over the Great Lakes. The first railroad between Buffalo and Chicago had been completed (if I am not mistaken) that same autumn. Chicago had, at that time, as far as I recall, 60-70,000 people. There, where our Savior's Church now stands (at May and Erie Street), there were green fields at that time. We couldn't get any farther than to Chicago by railroad and therefore had to take steamship to Milwaukee. From there a junction railroad had been built (the present C. M. & St. P. R. R.), and so we got as far as Whitewater. From there we had to use horse-transport to Koshkonong, where we were to visit Pastor A. C. Preus.

We rented a team of horses and a lumber-wagon and had a lively young American about 20 years old as coachman. He gave me a big surprise when he told me that in the winter he studied at a school of higher learning and when I heard that he had come so far that he even quoted Cicero: "*Quousque tandem, Catalina,*" etc. He was quite unpretentious and went about in common work-clothes. In Norway I was not used to such a juxtaposition, and here I got the first example of what I later learned to know as one of America's greatest advantages, that all honest work, manual as well as mental, is held in esteem, and that such work, however lowly it may seem, is not something one ought to regard as "below his worth," while idleness and laziness are a shame. "If only one could have learned that in Norway!" I thought. In my youth one did not learn that. Progress has certainly been made at home also in this regard in this half-century.

We then came to the Koshkonong parsonage. It was very modest, but we were received with open arms. Here the older Dietrichson, (the first "Norwegian pastor" here in this country) had resided for 4-5 years. He was, as is known, very interested in all kinds of ritual provisions. In Christian III's *Church Ordinance* there is a law that says: "The pastors should always be dressed in the proper clerical clothes." This he observed exactly, and it is

told how he, drove wood and water and something "other stuff", standing in his wagon, clothed in his long cassock and with a clerical collar [*ruff*] around his neck, which the starch had gone out of, so that it just hung there.

Pastor A. C. Preus was President of the Synod that had been established a month earlier. He was somewhat naïve in his church views and thought that it now had to be decided where I would go since there were two calls which were asking for a pastor. He didn't seem much troubled by the fact that I was ordained according to the call from the congregations in Iowa, and asked me where I would prefer to be. I reminded him that I had been ordained according to the call from Iowa and had pictured myself there. It was quite far away, and therefore the need was also greatest there. So it remained that I would go to Iowa.

I had not given great thought to the outward circumstances that I would face. I was promised a house with three rooms and a kitchen, and I was to have several hundred dollars in regular salary, along with honoraria [*accidentser*]. I knew that there was no house. The log cabins I had seen on the trip through Ohio had brought me to ask my wife what she would think about such a dwelling. Neither of us could answer.

In the meantime the pastor I was best acquainted with, Pastor H. A. Preus, had come to Koshkonong where he knew I was waiting. It was a happy meeting, and in the end, before we went west, we had to go up to Spring Prairie and see how things were for him and his wife. Yes, we traveled then, but so late in the day that it got completely dark several hours before we arrived. I sat and was amazed in my innocence at Pastor Preus, as in this "chilling darkness", how there was absolutely nothing to recognize to be able to find the way. I don't think he liked to hear my amazement, but since then I got a strong suspicion that it was his old horse that had been pilot.

The very small log house which was the parsonage, looked so strange [*underlig*] to our eyes both outside and in, and to our inexperi-

enced thought there was a curious contrast between the house and its inhabitants. In the little dayroom there were some spindle-back chairs and what was proudly called a “sofa”. It was a bench with a back support, which the pastor himself had made out of young aspen trees. The very high back support of this “sofa” was in front of the window so that the little firstborn in the parsonage (the present Professor Preus in Decorah) could be put up in the window frame without falling down. There he lay, when I first saw him. A stairway led up to the room above.

But I had to hurry to Iowa. It was difficult to find a sleigh, since it would take three days’ journey to reach the Mississippi. Finally a neighbor of the pastor, a Vossing, was so kind to take us on, and under his guidance we got on our way through Madison, Blue Mounds, Wingville, etc., to the ferry at the Wisconsin River. Our guide used his modified English so well that we didn’t lose our way. The trip was bitterly cold, and we were not well outfitted for such weather as we had. Meanwhile everything went well, until we came to the mentioned ferry, where the rail station “Bridgeport” is now found. There was supposed to be a ferry, but no ferry could go now. There had been thick ice on the Wisconsin River, but it had broken up, and in the strong current the ice floes were pushing against one another, so that it was difficult to understand how we should cross. There was no house on the south side of the river, where we stood, and no one to ask for advice. We realized that help might come from the other side where there were houses. What should we do? Travel the 4-5 miles back to the nearest house — and it was so late in the day and in such cold — we didn’t want to do that. We began to shout or yell with all our lungs could manage, and after a long while to our great joy we heard a good deal of shouting from the other side. In a while we also were able to see men who came across through the ice floes in a kind of transport which we finally could see was a canoe. There were two men. They knelt, each in his

end of the canoe. We then had to cross in this poor vehicle if we wanted to cross. We were ordered to sit down in the bottom of the canoe facing each other, to hold one hand on each side of the canoe, and to sit as still as we could. There was no talk about bringing the two suitcases along, which for the moment comprised all our luggage. According to them another trip would be made. The two “half-breed” Frenchmen again took their places on their knees, one in each end of the canoe. They couldn’t use oars (paddles), but instead they had long, sharp boat hooks to use on the ice floes. Our friend and sleigh-man from Spring Prairie wept when we set aground.

When we had gotten our suitcases moved over later, we got a quick sleigh to Prairie du Chien, where we arrived long after dark. Here we received word that we could not cross the Mississippi for a while, since it was iced over, and no one had passed over yet. So we had to stay there for several days. Finally a man came who had heard about our difficulty, and said that he believed he could help us cross now. Certainly no horse could cross the river, but he believed that a light buggy could be drawn across, in which my wife could then sit. The rest of us got to walk and pull the buggy. The man who wanted to help us cross said that he was a doctor. He was a little man with large gold glasses and a tall hat. It must have been a funny procession to see. In front went the little doctor with a big stick in his hand to test the ice, I walked in between the poles with my southwester on my head and boots that reached above my knees. In the buggy (or one-horse carriage,) sat my wife well packed in with buffalo robes. In the wagon there was also room for our suitcases, and behind came a young Norwegian boy whom the doctor had gotten hold of; he was to push from behind. When the doctor had found that the ice was safe, he came back and threw a rope, which was secured to both ends of the poles, around his neck and under his arms, and so it got under way. It was a great help that we had *terra firma* under our feet across the big islands that

lie in the course of the river, and so we successfully reached McGregor safe and sound. I have made many rather dangerous trips across the Mississippi in many different ways, which I cannot list here, but this, my first crossing, was most certainly the most curious.

In McGregor at that time there were only a few houses, but among them, of course, there was a “tavern”. We went in there. The question was, how would I arrange accommodations for my wife. As far as I could see, there was just one large common bedroom. But the owner said: of course, she will have our “ladies room”. There was an extension or enclosure in this room with a door, but no window — a dark little room with one bed in it! This was “the ladies room.”

We were fortunate enough to be able to rent a team of horses and a lumber wagon with a young Scotsman as driver, and so we went on our way to Little Iowa (as the region to which we were traveling was called when the congregation was assembled). Toward evening we came to the first Norwegian farm. The man there was friendly enough to take a horse and ride ahead as our guide. He thought that we ought to go to Nils Katterud (from Lier in Norway), who was one of the most respected Norwegian newcomers. He didn’t know what we would learn when we got to Katterud’s after sundown, that they had the house full of relatives who had recently arrived from Norway. The kind family nevertheless received us with great willingness and offered us lodging for the night, although they

couldn’t offer that we could stay longer.

The next morning Nils Katterud and I went on foot to Thron Lomen (from Valdres), the oldest and in many respects the most insightful man among the newcomers. He advised me to seek lodging in one of the houses closest to Katterud, since there was the matter of 80 acres land for the parsonage nearby. After some vain searching to find a room, we finally found one with Erik P. Egge (from Hadeland). They indeed had only a small log house, only one room, but they did not want clergy-folk to go looking further, if we wanted to be there. We were glad for the kind offer, which was made to us at such great sacrifice, and Nils Katterud teamed up his oxen and drove us and our two suitcases to Egge’s where we stayed for three months. 



*Egge cabin where the Korens first lived.
It is now at the Vesterheim Museum in Decorah, Iowa.*

(to be continued)

U. V. Koren was the first resident Norwegian Synod pastor west of the Mississippi. He served many congregations in northeast Iowa and southeast Minnesota and served as Synod president for many years.

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