



Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

Volume 13

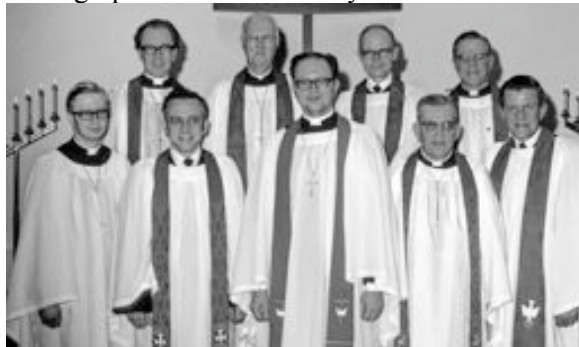
Spring (May) 2009

Issue 1

“A Piece of Time on Paper”

By Theodore Gullixson

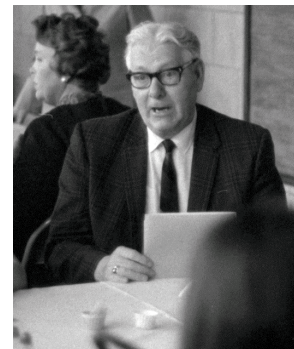
“A photograph is a piece of time on paper,” my late uncle, the Rev. G. A. R. Gullixson used to say. Photographs capture a moment in time, an event to be remembered, or a portrait of one who was younger. Photographs help people remember what was done, the people who lived. Photographs are visual history.



One part of the June ELS Historical Society meeting is a presentation entitled “Celebrating Our Past in Photos” by the Rev. Theodore Gullixson. He will show pictures taken by the late Rev. W. C. Gullixson of ELS people, events, and activities that span 40 years. Some photographs deal with ELSLO, Marv’s Resort, and

Morehead Evangelism, while others show people who are now with their Lord,

The most important part of this presentation will be you — what you do when you go home and look through your photographs for pictures of pastors, church buildings, events, and special people from ELS History. Perhaps they can be shown at other Society meetings or scanned into the computer for preservation in the ELS archives.



His Grace Endures From Generation to Generation:

Commemorating 150 years of God's Grace at First Shell Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church, Northwood, Iowa

By Ralph Olsen



In 1943, the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church commemorated the ninetieth anniversary of its founding and the twenty-fifth anniversary of its reorganization as the a Synod. For this anniversary, it published a book, *Grace for Grace*. S. C. Ylvisaker was the chief editor. First Shell Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church was a member of this synod.

In 1959, First Shell Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church of Northwood, Iowa observed its 100th year as a recipient of this same grace. Rev. Richard Newgard was the Pastor of this congregation, and its sister congregation, Somber Evangelical Lutheran Church of rural Northwood. The booklet published for this event was entitled, "A Century of Grace."

This year, 2009, the First Shell Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church is commemorating 150 years as a church whose members have been the recipients of the continuing Grace of God. The opening words of the 1959 commemoration booklet are as fitting today as they were at either of these earlier events:

"Enter Into His Gates With Thanksgiving, Into His Courts With Praise. Be Thankful To Him, and Bless His Name" Psalm 100: 4

The roots of **First Shell Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church** can be traced back to 1859, when a group of Norwegian immigrants who had settled in Worth County, Iowa established

Shell Rock Lutheran Church, and joined the newly formed Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The first pastor to serve the congregation was Rev. C. L. Clausen. He was called to conduct services just 4 times a year! This was because he lived at St. Ansgar, some 20 miles away by horse and buggy, and he also served several other congregations. Shell Rock Lutheran Church was served by a number of pastors over the next 50 plus years until the merger of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with other Lutheran church bodies into what was called the American Lutheran Church (ALC).

The formal establishment of First Shell Rock Church was accomplished in 1920, when a legal action awarded the Shell Rock Lutheran Church property to members who chose to be part of the merger of the American Lutheran Church, and those who objected to the merger, were forced to establish a new church. The new congregation met at the parsonage west of Northwood or the Court House in Northwood until a new church was built in 1924 at the site of the present church.

Meanwhile, others in the original Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church who did not agree with the merger withdrew from the ALC. In 1918 a minority group of 13 pastors and 3 congregations met at Lime Creek Lutheran Church,

and agreed to form a new synod which was called the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Their statement of purpose read:

"We, members present of the Synod for the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, ministers, delegates of congregations, and members of congregations join together for this purpose of continuing the work of the Synod on the old basis and according to the old principles."

Thus, the formation of what was to become the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

First Shell Rock was organized in 1920 and joined the Synod that same year. It joined with Somber Evangelical Lutheran church and shared a pastor for several years. They have since become members of a **Five Point Parish**. The churches in this parish are, **Lime Creek Church**, (where the new Synod was formed and was among the first of the congregations to be a part of the new Synod in 1919 (1860). Also joining the new synod in 1919 were **Lake Mills Synod**, which had reorganized in 1917, and **Somber**, which had reorganized in 1918 (1859). They were followed by First Shell Rock, which reorganized in 1920 (1859), and joined the Synod the same year. **Immanuel** Evangelical Lutheran Church was formed as a mission congregation in 1969, joined the parish in 1971, and joined the Synod in 1973. (Dates in parentheses indicate the date the original congregation was formed and organized.) These congregations are served by Rev. Karl Hermanson.

The members of First Shell Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church will be pleased to present a short history of our congregation to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society at its Annual Meeting. We take this time to reflect on the dedication and sacrifice of those who came before us, and who by God's Grace preserved His Word for this and future generations as our

only hope and guide.

To God Alone Be the Glory!



ca. 1930



Rev. Karl Hermanson

Ralph Olsen is a member of First Shell Rock Lutheran Church in Northwood, Iowa, and has served on various boards of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Music and Story Telling from a Pioneer Cabin **By Rebecca DeGarmeaux**

Join us for an offering of stories, demonstrations and music from Norwegian pioneer life. The ELS Historical Society is giving a special presentation this year during Synod week. The presentation will be in the Ottesen Museum Log Cabin Room and will feature artifacts from that room. See how the pioneers lived and maybe even learn to sign a Norwegian song or two.

Presentation times are:

Sunday, June 14 (Synod Sunday)
at 5:30, 6:00, and 6:30 pm
right after the picnic,

Tuesday, June 16
at 7:00, 7:30, and 8:00 pm.



Oak Leaves Editor(s) Needed

The Board of Directors of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society is seeking a new editor (or co-editors) for our newsletter *Oak Leaves*. The position oversees the work of producing four issues of the newsletter each year.

The work involves:

- soliciting articles on topics relating to the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod from various writers;
- editing the articles;
- planning the layout of each issue;
- getting each issue printed and delivered to the secretary who does addressing and mailing.

This is largely a “labor of love”, but there is a small stipend for the position.

The Board would appreciate input from our readership regarding possible candidates for the position.

Please contact the current chairman of the Historical Society:

Mark O. Harstad

Email: mharstad@blc.edu — Office: (507) 344-7334 — Home: (507) 387-2885

Music in the Lives of 19th Century Norwegian Immigrant Families

By Mark O. Harstad

No internet, no television, no radio. What did those people do to entertain themselves?

The Norwegian immigrants who arrived in America in the 19th century developed their own forms of entertainment. Among other things they made music in whatever ways they could, with the voice, with instruments they had packed into their immigrant chests, or with instruments they acquired in the new land.

They arrived in America with a rich musical heritage derived from various sources, and that heritage came to be commingled with other traditions in the “melting pot” of American society. Still today a recognized musical genre is called “Scandinavian Old Time” music, a designation which reflects the cross-pollination of cultures unique to America.

Their musical tastes and interests were shaped by several influences. Church music associated with the Reformation and Post-Reformation heritage of Germany and Scandinavia was a very important aspect of the musical culture. From their worship experience and religious instruction in Norway they knew very well the melodies and texts of this rich heritage. Their hymnbooks were packed into their immigrant chests along with their Bibles and Catechisms.

Their culture also included Norwegian folk music traditions. These traditions often had very local characteristics reflected in distinctive melodies and rhythmic patterns, which in turn shaped the styles of folk dance associated with different areas. Music as well as language had the characteristics of local “dialect.” Norwegian immigrants were often intensely loyal to the culture of the specific area from which they had come,

Telemark, Sognefjord, Setesdal, Hallingdal, etc.

The immigrants were aware of the differences between these two strands of their musical heritage, the churchly and the folk traditions, and generally kept clear lines of demarcation between them. Folk fiddles were not played in church. They were used for wedding processions through the countryside and to accompany folk dance, but not to accompany the singing of hymns in church.

Although the majority of them were of the peasant class, some Norwegian immigrants were familiar to some extent with the classical music tradition of their homeland as well. Many immigrants were aware of the work of the famous Norwegian violinist Ole Bull (1810-1870) who went on concert tours and became an international celebrity. Bull was influential in the development of other prominent Norwegian musicians such as Rikard Nordraak, composer of Norway’s National Anthem, and Edvard Grieg, the most famous of all Norwegian composers.

Nationalism in music was a powerful force among the Norwegians as it was with so many other ethnic groups in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It brought about an interesting blend of folk traditions and classical forms and styles. Grieg’s music is replete with such combinations. One of the main themes of his famous piano concerto is simply taken from the tuning of the “understrings” (or “sympathetic strings”) of the Norwegian folk fiddle. The influence of folk melodies provided Grieg with rich thematic material for many compositions.

Immigrants who packed violins into their immigrant chests became popular figures at family gatherings, cabin and barn

raisings, and other events in the pioneer period. They motivated others to acquire instruments and learn the familiar tunes from the old country as well as the popular tunes circulating in America. The accordion became a popular instrument in log cabins and sod shanties of the immigrants, and the repertoire expanded to include Oh, Susanna, Nellie Gray, and Auld Lang Syne.

The sons and daughters of the pioneers sometimes took musical interest and competency to new heights. This involved more formal study of music under well-educated teachers, and the acquisition of fine musical instruments. The arrival at an immigrant farm on the midwestern prairie of a new instrument ordered from a manufacturer or maker in cities like Chicago was a big event, fondly remembered for many years, even communicated to the next generation.

Norwegian immigrant families in search of new stringed instruments often sought out Norwegian violinmakers in America. Knute Reindahl became well known among the immigrants as a maker of fine instruments of the violin family. Reindahl had come to America as a boy in the 1860s, took up woodcarving, and then cabinet-making, and ended up a skilled and famous violin maker. He opened his first violin shop in Chicago in the 1890s, and then moved his operation to Madison, Wisconsin, in 1910, where he continued to make and repair instruments into the 1930s. The quality of his work was rec-

ognized at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris by judges who bestowed accolades on his craftsmanship.

Reindahl made over 500 violins in his career. Many of those instruments were acquired by Norwegian immigrant families and have been handed down from generation to generation. Today they are still recognized as instruments of high quality and continue to appreciate in value.

The photo (from the 1920s) accompanying this article illustrates perhaps better than any words the sense of musical heritage among Norwegian immigrant families. The patriarch in the picture, holding the cello, was the son of Norwegian immigrants. For this picture he assembled his family in "the music room", a space added onto the original dwelling specifically for making music. He had had the stringed instruments in the picture specially made for him by Knute Reindahl. The picture is a powerful statement regarding the place and importance of a valued musical tradition among the descendants of the immigrants.



ELS Historical Society—Thirteenth Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 20, 2009

at Bethany Lutheran College
Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center

CELEBRATING OUR NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE

9:00 am Registration and Coffee

9:30 am Opening Devotion

Celebrating Our Past in Photos

9:45-10:45 am *Session 1. Celebrating Our Past in Photos*

Presented by Rev. Ted Gullixson of Madison, Wisconsin

Celebrating Our Beginnings and Our Language Heritage

11:00am-Noon *Session 2a. First Shell Rock 150th Anniversary*

Session 2b. Learning a Hymn in Norwegian

Noon-1:15 pm Lunch

1:15-1:30 pm Business Meeting

Celebrating Family History

1:45-2:45 pm *Session 3. Creating a Family History Webpage*

Presented by Prof. Erling Teigen

2:45 pm Closing hymn and announcements

3:00 pm Afternoon coffee



For further information, contact Mark Harstad (Mark.Harstad@blc.edu)
or Elsa.Ferkenstad@blc.edu or 507-344-7354.

**Reservations
and
payment
must be
received by
June 1.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Membership dues (see chart on back page) = \$ _____

_____ number attending x \$15 = \$ _____

(includes luncheon and refreshments)

Additional donation = \$ _____

Total = \$ _____

Please send payment for meeting and membership by June 1 to:
ELS Historical Society - 6 Browns Court - Mankato, MN 56001

Oak Leaves
ELS Historical Society
6 Browns Court
Mankato, MN 56001

Renew your membership!

ELS Historical Society

Name: _____

Address: _____

Send completed form and check (see box below right
for type of membership and correct amount) to:

ELS Historical Society
6 Browns Court — Mankato, MN 56001

Oak Leaves is published periodically by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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Madson, John Moldstad, Robin Ouren

Oak Leaves welcomes articles of both Synodical and local significance
for publication. Articles maybe edited for style, clarity, or length to al-
low for publication. Submitted manuscripts will be deposited in the
archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

MEMBERSHIP

All membership
renewals are due **June 1**

Voting Membership:

\$10/year: individual
\$15/year: husband & wife

Associate Membership:

\$15/year: individual
\$25/year: institutional
\$5/year: student

Lifetime Membership:

\$200