

Immigration

God kvelt alle sammen.

Sonna and I were asked to present a program on Norwegian Immigration and particularity one of our own lodges' immigrants; Sigurd Lovold. Sigurd came to America in 1925, quite recent by most of our standards. He was a young man of 17 when he sailed into New York harbor and saw the Statue of Liberty. He was processed through Ellis Island. An experience he later relayed to his classmates in the one-room schoolhouse he attended to learn English. His final destination was Center ND. His aunt and uncle had a farm there and they had requested one of the Lovold boys come to help them, they were Mr. and Mrs. H.O. Monson.

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Sigurd left Norway while she was suffering from the affects of WW I. Sigurd was the 4th of 5 children Sigurd was born April 9, 1908, at Aaheim, Norway, to Samson Arneson and Johanna (Hellebust) Lovold. His 1986 story tells of going to work at 12 years of age on farms and also in fishing as Aaheim is on the west coast of Norway. When he tended cows at a seter, his days started at 3:30 AM. Imagine that for a boy of 13 or 14! Though he liked fishing and thought of being a sailor, he was the one who answered the plea from his aunt and uncle who wrote to Samson and asked if one their boys would consider coming to America. All their children had grown and moved away. They needed help on the farm in Oliver County. Sigurd told, "When we were kids, all the stories were about Americans, Americans," he said. People who had immigrated to the States and were back to visit gushed about the easy life compared with that in Norway. For young boys, there was one thought: "If only I could get go America." His uncle sent the \$300 needed for a stateroom on the ship and Sigurd applied in Jan 1925 and got to go in Aug 1925. With help from Norwegians he ran into at the train stations, he made it from Ellis Island to Stanton ND in 4 days. But in 6 months time, his uncle died. He stayed on with his aunt for 2 years and helped her. Then he worked for other farmers for 2 years and his aunt pleaded with him to come back. He eventually bought that farm. It was during those first years that he attended the one room school house to learn about his new language and country. He also said, "We had one person who could talk Norwegian, teaching me how to farm

for two weeks. And then I was on my own". He persevered on the farm and met and married Dorothy Woehler, June 10, 1944, and they raised their 4 children there too.

His own mother died in 1941, seven years before he returned to Norway. She had been dead 2 years before he knew it. It took him 23 years in America to make the first return trip. In all he went back 6 times. Sigurd died in 1999 and Dorothy resides in the Elm Crest Home in New Salem.

So what caused the Norwegian migration? Advertisements by the railroads and mining companies for jobs and land were a great influence. Recruitment was easy because of the economic conditions in Norway. Due to an increasing population, farmable land was scarce and expensive. A laborer in Norway would earn \$40-50 / year. In America, they could earn \$4-5/day when times were good. The migration started in 1825 and as land in the Wild West (Wisconsin and Minnesota) opened up, many came.

Politically, America was very appealing to the Norwegians. In Norway, only the elite had voting rights. By the 1860's many states were discussing the rights of women to vote. It was an opportunity that appealed to men and women in Norway. By the 1870's the railroads were building in the Red River Valley of MN and ND. Settlements moved into these areas and started the western migration as the rail lines were built.

A writer said in his 1893 book about immigrants "Criminals, paupers and idiots are cared for by the Northern governments and not permitted to leave. The poor and the vicious classes cannot pay for their own passage or get credit for a ticket. Cowards dare not and fools have not enough sense to emigrate."

In 1850, English laws were changed and most immigrants started arriving in Quebec from Norway, it was cheaper this way too. Each person was expected to pack their own bedding and food for 6-16 weeks, depending on the weather.

So this is a little about our ancestors immigration tales. I would like to add the Lovold family and my wife's family were related and from the same community of

Aaheim in Sunmore. Sonna's great grandmother Rikka Hellebust was a cousin of Sigurd Lovold's mother. We learned of a fascinating WWII story from relatives in Canada 4 years ago. There were two houses in Aaheim used by the Norwegian Resistance against the Nazi occupation. One was Great Gramma Rikka's sister Amalia Berge and the other was Rasmus Lovold. Amalia's husband and oldest sons were taken to the Nazi work camps in 1940 at the start of the occupation. She was ordered to take in German officers during the 5 year occupation. They lived on the main floor, she and the two youngest children lived in the upstairs and she harbored resistance fighters in the basement. It's a fascinating story and maybe one that even Sigurd Lovold did not know about his relatives in Norway.

I would like to leave you with this exchange from an immigrant back to family in Norway. She had lost touch with her family and they were reunited by letters through the Consul office. Sonna received this book from her landlords in Norway in 1978. It was a collection of "letters back home". This one was very telling of many families.

"read the letter from Martha Dahl to her niece in Norway, 1931"