FIRST NORWEGIAN NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED IN AMERICA



Photo by courtesy of Karl T. Jacobson. Luther College. Decorah, Iowa. Reproduced herewith is the first page of Volume 1, Number 1, of the first Norwegian newspaper in America—NORDLYSET (Northern Light), published on July 29, 1847. James Denoon Reymert was editor. He was assisted in the publication by Even Hansen Heg and Soren Bache.

THE FIRST NORWEGIAN NEWSPAPER

IN AMERICA

On July 29, 1847, in Even Heg's old log cabin, was struck off the first copy of the first Norwegian newspaper published in America. It was called the NORDLYSET (The Northern Light). Its publishers were Heg, Bache and Reymert. Even Hansen Heg and Soren Bache furnished the financial backing. James Denoon Reymert was the first Editor. Eric Anderson Rude, a compositor from the Chicago Tribune, was the first typesetter. Later Ole Torgeson, Ole Heg and Even Skofstad were the typesetters. Mr. Reymert obtained the type and the small press on which he printed his paper, in Philadelphia.

The first editor's portrait donated by the late Dr. P. Langland, of Milwaukee, may be seen in the museum building at Heg Memorial Park. The crude press on which the first issues of Nordlyset are believed to have been printed, may also be seen there. It was presented to the museum by Mr. Edward Erickson of Waubeesee.

At this writing no copy of the NORDLYSET is possessed by the Heg Memorial Museum. It is hoped that some way will be found to supply this omission, as many interested visitors often ask about it. The most complete file of NORDLYSET now in existence is preserved in the library at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and forms important source material for the history of the Norwegian element in this country. A very fragmentary file is preserved in the Minnesota Historical Society at St. Paul, and a more extensive file at the Luther Theological Seminary in the same city. One copy may be seen at the museum of the State Historical Society at Madison, Wisconsin.

The original paper was a four-page, 4-column folio, 8 x 11 inches. It's price was \$2.00 per year, 6c per copy. After the first few issues Mr. Reymert built his own printing office across the line in Waukesha county.

In Knud Langeland's NORSEMEN IN AMERICA, published in the Norwegian language in 1888, may be found a

list of NORDLYSET's 276 subscribers. In 1847 slavery was already an issue, and since liberty of person and religion were very precious to these immigrants, NORDLYSET became the Norwegian organ of the Free Soil (later the Republican) party, and on its subscription list were to found many of the most enlightened and progressive citizens of the middle west. A cut of the American flag headed the editorial column, and a translation of a portion of the Declaration of Independence was in the first issue. The motto of the paper was "Freedom and Equality" later changed to "Free Land, Free Speech, Free Labor and Free Men".

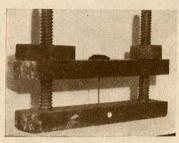
Reymert continued to publish NORDLYSET until May 18, 1850. At this time Knud Langeland purchased the equipment, changed the name of the paper to DEMOCRATEN, and published it in Racine. When publication of the DEMOCRATEN was suspended, Knud Langeland was invited by John Andersen of Chicago to become editor of the SKANDINAVEN, a daily Norwegian-American publication which has since become the largest newspaper in the Norwegian language published outside of Norway.

It is an interesting fact that six of the first eight Norwegian newspapers published in this country had their beginning in Wisconsin.

James D. Reymert's career was among the most interesting in this early settlement. He was well educated, having practiced law in Norway before coming to America. His mother was a scotch woman, Jessie Sinclair Denoon, and his ability to speak English made him influential in the Muskego colony. He married Caspara Hansen, daughter of an immigrant dancing teacher. Early records of Racine County show that he owned a great deal of land. His name is signed to the Constitution of Wisconsin. He was elected a member of the first legislative assembly in 1849 and also in 1857, and as a state senator in 1854 and 1855. One of his early ventures in this country was the construction of a saw mill at the head of Lake Denoon, where he utilized the surrounding timberlands to provide logs used in the construction of the old plank road from Janesville to Milwaukee, as well as in many of the homes and farm buildings of the nearby communities. He established a post office at Lake Denoon and served in the capacity of postmaster for several years. This post office has since been discontinued.

In 1861 Mr. Reymert moved to New York, where he became a prominent lawyer. He died in Alhambra, California in 1896.





Pictured above are Editor Reymert, and the small press on which the NORDLYSET's first issues are said to have been printed. The Press is now in Heg Park Museum.

Et settlement som venter på kronprinsparet.

Brev til «Varden» fra en gammel norsk-amerikaner.



Tommerhuset og litt av miseumsbygningen.

Vi er begeistret over å lese 1 våre aviser at kronprins Olav og kronprinsesse Märtha har planer om en tur til United States neste år.

Vårt håp er at Muskigo setlementet med dets mange historiske minder må bli nedskrevet på parets reiserute som et stoppested. Noget bedre sted å stanse og studere norskdommen i Amerika tror jeg ikke kan finnes noget sted i vårt land. Her er norsk natur og herlige minder bevart fra de tidligste år i utvandringen. Tømmerhuset som er opsatt var bygget for 100 år siden, og er utstyrt som presteboligen var i de dage. Utstillingsbygningen med rine 700 gjenstande er et museum som gir vidnesbyrd om hvordan folk bodde og levet i de dage, og hvilke redskaper de hadde til sin rådighet til å vinde det daglige brød for sig og sine.

Underlige tanker gjennemstrømmer oss når vi sammenligner nutidens mange opfinnelser til å tilfredsstille våre daglige gjøremal med de simple redskaper de dengang hadde til sin rådighet,

'Det var høvdingblod i disse menn og kvinner som nedsatte sig derute og vant sig frem gjennem alle strabatser.

Bygden er vistnok en av Wisconsins fineste, og i finansiell henseende en av de verdifulleste i Staten. Den ligger ca. 20 mil fra Milvaukee, den store by med Michigansjøen hvor de første emi-granter stoppet før de nedsatte sig i Muskigo, og ca. 26 mil fra Racine som her er kaldt den danske hovedstad i Amerika. I 1943 skal folket derute feire 100 årsdagen for sin kirke, som var den første Norsk-lutherske kirke i Amerika, Forberedelser er allerede startet for denne høitid. Der-ute blev den første norske zvis trykt, Nordlyset, og der var herberge og stoppested for trette emigranter som var på vei lenger mot vest. Her hviler også støvet Liergutten fra Drammen, oberst Hans Christian Hog. St. to en av ham har en pen plass i parken, som bærer hans navn.

Vi tror at dette sted er verdig til å ha en kongesønn fra Norge på besøk. Vi er viss på at kronprinsparet vil føle at de der vil neurs pilled he his I

I zerhedighet ber vi Dem, hr. raiditish, at Deres blad Verden vil opinentre deres bishet kronerius Olav og ironprinsesse Märthe til ikke å forglenne Musking-Gellenentet på deres reise. En stand der for dem vil bli verdifull og en højtidelig og skjønn belønning for folket derute.

Jeg kan likesom se at Olav og Märtha står derute på højden ved kirken og de beskuer markene som ligger fremfor dem, kun da kan de forstå hvad det norske folk som utvandret i sin ungdom, har utført. Der var bare skog og sumpland, full av sykdom og pest da de nedsatte sig der, men de maktet alt og bygget så å si en Edens have som er verdig å sæs av alle. Kan så skje at en kongesønn kan komme til dette sted, da blir vi istand til å nedskrive i



Liergutten fra Drammen.

Muskigo historie: «En kongesønn kom for å krone deres virke».

Takk herr redaktør for den imstekommenhet som er blitt mig bevist. «Varden» var fars og mors dagblad. 32 år er lang tid kra i ljent og som mandet. Og minderne blit skjønnere for havert år.

derne blir skjønnere for hvert år. Vennlig bilsen til Varden og dens lesere.

> Nils Bergan, 720 Munroe ave Recine Wis.