

**THEY CAME FROM KVITSEID**

**Part II**

**correspondence**

**of the**

**HOUKOM FAMILY**

# THEY CAME FROM KVITSEID II

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## Notes from the Translator - Dordi Round

Once again I have had a winter of excitement and enjoyment, learning to know more about the Houkom family, through a new collection of letters and documents entrusted to me by Helen Forbes and Mason Solem. Some of the papers are fragile originals; others are machine copies. Some of them reveal that there was mis-information, especially about the Kjerkebø Family, in the material I translated in 1983-84. Aslak Houkom's letters from the 1930's cast much light on these misconceptions and their origin, but there are many interesting letters predating those, one as far back as 1856.

Except for an undated fragment by Anders Houkom, I have arranged all the letters in chronological order, to give historical sequence; but there are gaps and unsolved mysteries. However, for those who wish to study the writings of one individual, I will include in the Appendix a list of dates and page numbers for each letter writer. Where necessary this will include pages from both books. The Appendix will also include documents other than letters, and information which Aslak Houkom collected while revisiting Norway in 1930.

In an attempt to preserve the individuality of the letter writers, I have capitalized words, or omitted capitals, just as the writers have done; and I have used their spellings of place-names and abbreviations: for example, Vixconsien; and Mple (for Minneapolis). As before, many variants of personal family names are used, sometimes having a name spelled two ways in one letter.

Olaf Ness, Ole Naes and Olaf Salteveje, are all names for one person, the husband of Svennung (Sveinung) Houkom's eldest daughter, Anne, who is also known as Big Anne, because her youngest sister is Anne Andrea, or Little Anne. Anne's sister Tarjer changed her name to Thora when she emigrated. She must not be confused with Tarjei, the Houkom hired man, who also emigrated.

When dating their letters with numerals, the Norwegians put the day numeral before the month numeral. This is obvious in the date like 22/3/1887, but the numerals 12 and less can cause confusion to Americans. 3/8/87 is NOT March 8 but August 3. As a reference help I have given each letter a heading, including writer, recipient, and date in the American way, while below I have put the date as the writer had it.

The Norwegian word korn, meaning corn, does not refer to corn-on-the-cob. To most Europeans, corn means wheat, oats, rye or barley, whichever is grown locally, or collectively to refer to more than one.

Norway has two official languages: (1) Bokmaal or Riksmaal; i.e. book language or language of the realm, used by educated people, and in books, magazines, and newspapers. (2) Nynorsk or Landsmaal; i.e. new Norwegian or rural language. Actually this is ancient, rather than new; but it is referred to as new, because during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it became "newly" popular to write in dialect, rather than in educated language. Landsmaal includes all the dialects, which vary greatly from valley to valley, and in the written forms there is no standardized spelling. The complications are increased when the writer has had a total of three months' formal schooling, and spells as he or she thinks best. Some of these letters have been more fun than the best anagrams and cryptograms I have previously tackled, especially when written minutely in a style of penmanship quite unlike any I have seen elsewhere.

Anders Houkom had a good education, but some of his earlier letters were written in dialect, with most unusual spellings. His later ones, especially those written after he began to teach, show that he knew Bokmaal perfectly well, but used Landsmaal for fun. In his early letters I was interested to find dialect words used in letters to me from my older friends in the Stavanger area, plus many words I have never seen elsewhere, but could guess from the context. I'm grateful to him for teaching me more of the

Telemark dialect. For those of you who are interested in the language of your heritage, I will list some of these variants. If you are not interested, you can skip on to the main body of the work, which I hope you will find as enjoyable as I do.

Meanwhile, I would like to thank Helen and Mason for letting me have these very special documents, and to send warm greetings to all the Houkom descendants I have had the good fortune to meet.

Dordi Round  
October 1984 to June 1985

Translator's note: I have decided to begin Book II of "They Came from Kviteseid" with a fragment of a letter from Anders Svennungsen Houkom, undated, but page numbered 3. I do not have the other pages. It gives such an interesting glimpse of 19<sup>th</sup> century life on a Telemark farm; but first I will explain a few of his references, for the benefit of those who are not familiar with Norwegian country life.

Arne Garborg, born in 1851, was a novelist from south western Norway, whose boyhood and youth were completely overshadowed by his religious-fanatic father. Hellfire and brimstone were the daily promises inflicted on the family for imaginary sins, and happiness was the greatest sin of all. Garborg's novels reflect this darkness.

The repeated initials ASSH stand for Anders Svennung's Son Houkom, and his younger brother, Aslak.

Anders uses 'staulen' for the word usually spelled stølen, which I have translated summer pasture. Almost every valley farm owned or had grazing rights to a saeter, or mountain farm, with a stone-walled enclosure for out-door milking, a sleeping cabin, and a small dairy-hut. Some farms also had fishing rights in a mountain lake, in this case Sollia, or Sunny Meadow, where another cabin gave shelter. Some farmers, like Svennung, allowed a man to live rent-free in the lake cabin, in return for a supply of fish for the farm. Heiva was apparently the Houkom fisherman. Sometimes the arrangement also involved the provision of game-birds and wild reindeer, which the farmer himself might not have the time, desire, or skill to hunt.

### Fragment of a Letter by Anders S. Houkom

... However the light is mixed with the dark. I cannot completely lose myself in the enjoyment of the happy memories without the ugly and sorrowful pushing themselves forward and casting shadows over the beautiful pictures. As when good memories, where father and mother were the direct cause of the full experience of happiness, filled my mind, then so often such thoughts would intrude: Yes, yes, they were grand days! But what, then, did father and mother gain from their toiling and self-sacrificing life for me and the others? Then follows the one picture after the other of mother, as so often: "My legs ache so badly; oh, how good it is to be able to sit down," when in the evening she sat on the milking-stool close to a cow and began to milk; that was her rest. Many such memories come unbidden and blend themselves in with the happy ones and they become sorrowful. I will not say that this is the right way to look back on childhood and youth; but what can one do, when such thoughts come unbidden. We people are so completely different. I am more and more reminded of this, the older I grow; therefore I become (at least so I myself believe) milder in my judgement over my fellow-human-being's way of living and acting. I have sometimes thought of Garborg, who was never able, in spite of his great talent for describing life, to depict any of his young characters in light colors, because of his father's dark life and tragic fate. That which is impressed on the soft wax of a child's mind is never easy to rub out again.

Yes, I remember quite well our first trip to Solli Cabin and cut our names into the door: ASSH, ASSH, 1871. It was the first thing I looked for when one day in June 1887 I opened the door to Solli Cabin. The other thing that stands clearly in my memory from that trip was that we threw our fish-lines into the pool near the dam but didn't get a single 'bite'. Father was busy fixing and tarring Heiva's row-boat, and there came a shower of rain and I don't think we had our jackets with us, for I clearly remember that we became wet through to the skin in spite of the fact that we tried to creep in under the bows of the boat and were so cold we shivered. "Poor things," said father.

My first trip to the summer pasture was however in the summer of 1869, when mother, Olaf and I about noon one Sunday went to Hovstaul, where Big Anne along with a hired boy from 'Huken' was staying with the milk-cows and calves. Olaf was to carry a large empty milk can up to the pasture. Mother fetched a loaf of bread from the Big-Storehouse cellar; but it was too big to go through the opening of the can. Mother knew what to do; she went into the hearth-house and cut it in two and down in the can went the pieces. I thought mother was very clever that time. We rested twice on the way up Solli Hill; mother was happy then and talked and told us stories. She walked fairly lightly; she was then only 44 years old, but had already carried 11 children under her heart and later when they were born carried them on her heart in motherly tenderness in spite of the endless toil. Think of her and then of present-day mothers with their one, two or three children in a modern house and comfort; hospital, anesthetic and nurses at the child's birth; sympathetic talk and 'mother's day'. And what are the fruits before and now.

You can believe there was joy and festivity at Hovstaul that Sunday. In a couple of hours Anne and the hired boy went out to round up the cows for milking. We took our time. Before we left to go home mother cut up some of the bread from the milk-can in small pieces and poured sweet milk on and so we three ate. You can imagine how it tasted to an 8-year-old. Oh, what an appetite.

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Note: The 'Big Anne' mentioned by Anders was his eldest sister Anne, called 'Big' to distinguish her from the youngest sister, Anne Andrea. Although Anders refers to eleven babies, three of them must have died in infancy, for only eight children are listed in the records at present available, as follows:

1. Olaf born May 31, 1851
2. Anne born April 8, 1852
3. Hans born April 8, 1855
4. Tarjer (Thora) born September 16, 1856
5. Tone born July 30, 1859
6. Anders born August 17, 1861
7. Aslak born May 4, 1864
8. Anne Andrea born June 19, 1866

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**From Svenung Ouversen to Svenung Houkom 12/18/1856**

Coone Prairie the 18 December 1856

Dear Brother-in-law Svenung Olsen Hukum,

Now I must for the first time write to you a few lines to let you know that we are all in good health and live well till this date which we have the good God to thank for. Likewise we also wish the same good news from you when you write to us again. However I must admit that I last winter was very sick for 6 weeks! A kind of fever which also struck my brother Aslak Saave as well as our youngest brother Ouver lay in the same fever for two months until God of His endless goodness took him to Himself to Joy and Blessedness. Our twin sons Ole and Ouver grow and thrive well. Here next that here has been an average year. I had 20 acres to take crop from this year from which raised two hundred and twenty-three and a half bushels maize corn, and 50 bushels potatoes and a great deal of garden fruits. Here next prices per bushel a bushel is two Norwegian bushels. Wheat per bushel 1 dolar, oats P.B. ½ dolar Maize P.B. ½ dollars. Potatoes P.B. ½ dollars. So that is my harvest in addition to seed and food for the house brings in for me 200 dollars this year.

These aforementioned prices seem to you much exaggerated but it is tp the cultivator's advantage and in the same way profitable for the worker's class for then they receive much higher daily pay and the money is more spread out among the public thereby.

Here next what animals I am in possession of which are 2 pair oxen 3 cows 2 heifers 2 sheep and 4 pigs prices per animal 1 horse from one to 200 dollars a pair of oxen from 100 to 100 and 50 dollars a cow from 25 to 35 dollars, a sheep from 2 to 3 dollars. I have this summer bought various equipment for the first an old cradle for 21 dollars, a cleaning machine for 26 dollars, a plow 14 dollars and various other farm tools. Altogether I have spent a lot on my land as I have broken 15 Acres with various other repairs on the House Fences etc. here next prices for worked land here in this District 40 Acres of worked land here on the Prairie costs from 400 to 1000 dollars. So that my Land Ownership is worth about 2000 dollars perhaps you think these land prices are unreasonable but I will not exchange my arable land for the farms which are bought and sold in Norway for 2000 dollars.

I must not forget to inform you that the Settlement here will soon be regulated with a School and Church the same as in Norway and we have bout 3 quarters walk to the church and can see it from the farm here however to which I have contributed 10 dollars and must contribute 10 more in Winter. This is a pretty God's house standing on a visible place for the whole prairie and will cost about 3000 dollars when it is finished.

I will this time advise Brother Ole to undertake the journey here if it isn't contrary to your decision for I believe it is advantageous for you as here he can be both sexton and school teacher for fairly good pay. Sister Birgit is greeted also that it would be useful to her for a servant here has from 5 to 10 dollars per month and as well as that it is much finer work. What they should or shouldn't bring here. Dyed Wadmal and ready made clothes must be brought but no more ready made clothes than they need on the journey. Sell your silver breastpins and buy spoons. If you bring me a half dozen eating spoons I shall pay well for them and a half dozen tea spoons of silver. Brother Aslak is much thanked for His last writing which I received in the end of September which I immediately will answer just as I also wish an answer to this.

I wish to have a visit from you if not more than in Christmas holy time but you certainly won't yearn for it in Winter (ha ha). Herewith I must cordially end my writing with diligent and friendly greetings to you

all. Live well in God.

Svenung Ouversen

The address for here sounds thus Spring Velle, P.O. Bad Ax Co., Wis.

Translator's Note: For this letter and the next I worked from typed copies. Most of the rest in this collection are from the handwritten originals or from photocopies of originals.

In this letter I have been very careful to include or omit capital letters, periods, and commas, exactly as the typed copy did, and I have followed the spellings of dolar, Dolars, Dollars, as I found them (Val's note: when retyped, the spell checker corrected many of those errors). The translator included some notes about the letter as follows:

The above-copied letter was addressed to Hr. Svennung Olsen Houkom Bratesbaerges Amt Vidsø Post Offis Skien Norveg Europe. It was sent without envelope. It was only folded together and sealed with wax. In another handwriting, apparently of the postmaster in Springville is written the sender's name and address, as follows:

Svennung Ouversen Kaasa  
Adres. Springville P.O. Bad Ax Co.,  
Wisconsin in America  
Springville Wis. Dec 19<sup>th</sup>

The number 65 is also written on the address side of the letter in two places, as well as once on the backside. There are five postmarks on the letter, as follows: One on the address side, name of the place illegible with the date 23 Jan. Also one with the same date on the back side, it looks as if the name of the place is either Kristiania or Kristiansand. Also two others on the back side, names of the places illegible, but apparently of 27 and 28 January 1957.

Finally one on the address side of the letter: Svinesund 5 2 1857

From Svennung Kjaerkebøn to Svennung Houkom 10/23/1866

Coon Prairie the 23 October 1866

Dear Brother-in-law,

In last August month received your much honored of 26<sup>th</sup> March this year for which I here enclose my most obliged thanks. I will pursuant to your request in the same letter comply with your wish as far as I am capable thereof but it is fairly certain that I can not as both you and I wished, give you a satisfactory appraisal of it as you desire. As concerning conditions here now compared to before the War, whether property is dear etc. then I can inform you very briefly that all things are in particularly high price as you will see of the following: 1 bushel wheat costs 1 dollar to 1 dollar 55 cents, oats 30-50 cents, barley 50-80 cents, maize corn 50-80, butter about 30 cents per pound, pork from 10-15 cents per pound, meat 6-7 cents pr. Pound, all to be understood as fresh. Pay for work is now for Autumn and Winter work for a simple worker from 75 to one dollar pr. Day.

Cultivated land which is fenced and plowed but without buildings costs about 15 dollars pr. Acres and land with buildings is depending on the buildings more expensive. But completely uncultivated land is much cheaper such as 2, 3, 4 and 5 dollars pr. Acres but then it is usually hard to work mostly small woods and stumps and much else. Animals are here as follows a good milk cow costs 30-40 dollars, a good fairly big horse from 150-200. Yes if it is very good it costs more and a set of new harness costs from 40-50 dollars. A pair of work oxen cost 130-160 dollars but then the yoke doesn't cost more than 1-3 dollars, and a man can also make it himself from a piece of wood. Sheep cost from 3-5 dollars a piece, pigs are sold alive from 8-10 dollars per 100 pounds. Merchants' wares cost: coffee 32-34 cents a pound, white sugar 20 ditto, brown 12-15, white linen 20-30 cents pr. Yard. That is a piece 3 feet square. Wool clothes are very dear however there are countless kinds of clothes of wool and cotton which are not very dear but which can be quite strong.

Concerning the journey I will advise you to embark on a sailing ship as it will be so much cheaper for one who has such a large family and by all means try to come out the sooner the better in the spring for then one has almost always better wind and a quick passage and then one can come up through the land before it becomes too hot and is less liable to have climate sickness and then one can come here so early in the summer that one can get work in the mowing time and better convenience for making preparations for winter. And concerning the best transportation up through the land it is usual that one goes the way which the Captain sends his passengers on for it is not so good to be parted from your company. And if you have a choice then it is the best way I know to go direct from Quebec to Lacrosse on the railway and make sure that one has a contract and tickets therefore all in one, for the exchange countless times with railway and steamship entails many difficulties. When you come to Quebec you should write to me immediately so that I shall if possible meet you in Lacrosse. Concerning your weakness it is difficult to say anything but I know that your sister Thone was less sick from the journey and after she came here than in Norway and I know several cases in which on by traveling at sea and changing climate has become better, but I also know the opposite.

Concerning the things you should bring with you. Then clothes are the first thing you must bring but preferably material for clothes the most you can but take care to pack them carefully underneath so that the Customs Officers don't see them or you could come to pay customs for them but other things such as silver articles, except eating and tea spoons, are not always very good to bring, however many small things which don't take much room can be quite useful. But if you decide to travel then do me the service of buying me a very good sheepskin coat, as I have heard that it is very good to get such a one purchased from a tanner in Laurdal, but perhaps that would be a great trouble for you.

I would also wish that you would buy me a pair of wagon axles namely for a four wheel wagon of the kind that are turned with appropriate bushings and also strong and thick of the best kind, I have heard that such are available to buy and that they can be taken apart in the middle. If not just take them off so that you can lay them in a box. There are plenty such available here but very expensive and with such brittle iron that they often don't last. I shall on their arrival pay you well for your trouble and outlay.

Although I would rather not advise anyone for or against traveling to America I cannot other than say that I think it would be advantageous for you and especially for your numerous family to come here as it is certain one has for the future better prospects here than in Norway presuming that one in Norway does not have great wealth and does not have really promising prospects. But if it is hard to make both ends meet there, then it is certainly the best to come over here while one is still capable. From the Spring and long into the Summer it looked as though it would be an especially good year, but on account of the extreme heat and especially much rain particularly in early Autumn, it did not have a good result so I can say that over here it was less than an average year. Everything is fine with my family and me and nothing new has happened in the family. All are well and healthy and God be praised live well. Last Spring I wrote a letter to Aslak Gadeholdt which I presume has arrived and so I will omit writing here about many things concerning the family. Finally I must break off with a very diligent and loving greeting to all relatives and friends which greeting you will most kindly offer. First and last you dear brother-in-law are most diligently greeted and wished all happiness and blessing with wishes for a speedy reunion. Your -  
Svennung Kjaerkebøn

Since space permits it, I will also bid you kindly to tell or let my sister's sons Guldmund and Høie read the following words from me. I am now God be praised both well and healthy and have in the recent time been with my son Tron, otherwise I am kindly and lovingly received by whichever of my children I will be with. I have it especially good in my old age so that I have nothing to complain about for my bodily concerns. Both you and the above named Guldmund and Høie as well as all relatives and friends are diligently greeted from

Your fondly remembering  
Karen Kjaerkebøn

Translator's note: This is Karen Knutsdatter, widow of old Oover, Svennung's mother.

P.S. I have not talked with anyone from our birthplace who has come over here last year, but I have heard that John Roholdt has bought himself a farm in the State of Minnesota about 40 English miles from here, I have heard he is very well satisfied. Three weeks ago I sold my share in the Threshing machine after I had threshed for a month's time for 200 dollars. For next Autumn I intend to buy another new one again. In case you decide not to travel, write to me immediately and let me hear your condition. But I certainly expect that you will come as it is always likely to be thus when one has begun to think about a trip to America it is usually nothing else but in the end Emigration must occur. Yes dear brother-in-law I delay you with many incoherent words for which I must beg forgiveness. Herewith you are most heartily committed to God's guardianship and fatherly guidance in all your undertakings. Live well! I and the family greet you diligently.

S. Kjaerkebøn

My address is Mr. Svennung Overson Kjaerkebøn, Coon Prairie P.O. Vernon Co. Wis. U. States

From Anders Hansen Houkom to Ole Svennungsen Houkom 3/29/1870

To Honorable  
Ole Svennungsen Houkom

Since you seem to have the firm decision to travel to America as presumably in agreement with your parents is well pondered, then herewith I will not either refrain from sending forward some well-meant words to you, which are a little guidance, not only for the journey, but for the rest of your life, when you for the biggest part come to live among complete strangers.

The first is that you at all times pray Our Heavenly Father, that he will hold his care over you, who is greater than we sinning people have a notion about, and the other is that you in the future, keep in mind, to behave yourself in such a way among unknown as well as among known people, that it can be to gain and advantage for yourself, to honor for your parents, and relatives and to a delight for the Lord.

Just the same you must always remember that you are no longer at home with Father and Mother, so first you must learn to depend on yourself, and that is the first Stumbling block, a young man begins to desire in the world. But think on the old Proverb, which also is true, if you believe that every man is a rogue you will not be deceived, but you must not either play the rogue yourself against anyone, but hold yourself passive.

Avoid all light minded company, so you will be respected and honored of every honest man, which I believe you already have a little experience of, although you are young. This must you in no way lose sight of.

I am also sure that from your home you do not lack admonitions, in even dearer and greater form, but you probably ignore them, or rather do not remember.

The Honor you showed me by visiting me before your journey I grant you many thanks for. At our parting last Monday by Brunkeberg Church I spoke of coming to Houkom later in the week, but as that can be uncertain for me, on account of the many unforeseen happenings, which for me have often occurred, I will herewith most lovingly greet you, and say many thanks, for every loving service you have shown as a smart boy towards me.

As a little mark of honor I send you enclosed 5 Speciedaler, as I know that such, on an expensive journey, are acceptable, considering the distance you intend to go.

And so I will wish you a pleasant crossing, and also that the Lord will grant you support as well on the journey, as in the future in the new home you intend to inhabit.

So must you live well, and greet all relatives and friends from me, that I am their, and your, respected, obliging.

Farewell Ole,

Gjorsund, the 29<sup>th</sup> March 1870  
Anders Hansen Houkom

N.B. When you like all others have loose money, on you, so must you bid your mother sew a pocket inside your vest or coat for you, so it is not as easy to snap away, for the unrighteous.

It is not impossible that I still send you a letter before you leave from Houkom or Skien.

Translator's note: I have tried to locate Anders Hansen Houkom in the many pages of information now available to me, but he is not mentioned. However, Pastor Olaf Houkom's Mother, Marie Hansdatter Salteveje, had a brother, Anders Hansen Salteveje, and in several of his letters (Book I) Olaf sends greetings to Uncle Anders, sometimes referring to him as Mother's Brother Anders Houkom, so perhaps this Anders moved from Salteveje to one of the three Houkom farms and from there to Gjorsund.

From Andreas Ness to Svennung Olsen 6/20/1870

Cheepewa City P.O.  
Cheepewa County Minnesota  
The 20<sup>th</sup> June 1870

My Dear Svennung Olsen

Your letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> March this year have I to my great joy received and thank you most kindly for it. You remind me also of all the confidence you especially have to me who has been gratified by your letter's whole contents, and it should be my wish that you are not disappointed in this your confidence. It is dear to me to hear you are well and that your wife is getting better, which also certainly will be the case with your daughter. It is certainly a sickness which many young girls are prone to. Also I thank you for all the news you sent me in your letter, it is always of interest to hear news from the Fatherland how they there struggle and work both in the fleshly and private family life. I suppose what most can interest you in these lines is to write about your son with his arrival and how he can acquire Land since also you are decided to choose this Land as your future home. For this reason I restrict myself to what I believe can most interest you and omit insignificant stories of this or that which certainly also basically are somewhat immaterial.

What now concerns your son and what I believe is right and most advantageous for him who is ignorant of the conditions you probably have the opinion that he simply and plainly could travel west and take up Land for you, or also for himself, but this would scarcely be possible, as for the first he must have a legal age of 21 years and for the next he must be so supplied with money that he could keep himself well in a new and undeveloped Land you can comprehend would not be adequate to work, however a man tries to help himself the best he can.

The most advantageous for him is to be in Wisconsin among his relatives where he can have a means of earning money - and learn to know something about the conditions. For the rest I shall in so far as it lies in my power be helpful to him in Word and Deed as soon as he comes in my vicinity. But immediately to go out West would be too irresponsible for him who seems fairly inexperienced and also young.

Another thing is that when you come then you must all share the new settler life, problems, and then it is good to have a Son in America and for a Son to have a Father and Mother after him for together to set foot under a new table. I shall write to your son and tell him that I have written to you and what I believe he should do thereafter, if he can be with his relatives in Wisconsin and what you believe is right.

My advice is that when you come after next year you leave your family behind in Wisconsin and yourself travel west to look over land for yourself where you believe it best. For it is not good to travel around with a family in the west and it is not good to choose land at the first the best place. Meanwhile it will be time to write more about it when your journey is first decided to occur.

I have had a letter from Gunder H. Salteve he and his family are all healthy and live well. The mentioned portrait of Gunder I shall try to get and send you later. From Jorgen in California I have also had a letter; he writes that he will come on a visit to us now in Summer and thereafter make a trip to Norway, if unexpected hindrances don't cause delays. From Anders, Eivind's son, I can greet you. He is for 14 days since traveled west to the same place as we - just before June he was married to Bergit Torgersdatter Haugen from SkaeseBygd and has gotten a clever and good wife. Also from Hans Salteve who also is here west he is also well and finds himself contented.

Don't forget to greet my mother's brother Anders Hansen and Sigton I should wish to get some lines from him.

Dear Friend I end my present letter with many greetings and wishes for you as well from my brothers as myself. We wish all that it may happen so that we one time again can gather here in America and tell each other about one thing and another from old times and share family life together.

Now live wonderfully well and let me see you soon again. Write to your always devoted.

Andreas Ness

Olaf to Tarjer (Thora) 10/25/1875

La Crosse, Wis. Oct 25, 1875

Dear Sister:

Long enough, yes much too long have I put off answering your very welcome writing of 9<sup>th</sup> July this year. Your letters to me are an indescribable joy, and that so much more when they bring me such happy news, as that you are all healthy, many of the sick have become well, others with a blessed death have entered the eternal peace and happiness. Thus is the Lord's all-wise rule always good for us, when we only in trust and love obey and serve him. How it gladdens me dear sister, that you again so richly have won health after such a long and weakening sickness, which it must be, which you have been plagued with but how strengthening can not such sickness be in spiritual respect, for we have many examples of, how many have been stretched on a sick-bed and first there come to consider their soul's condition, for as long as they have health and everything goes well for them, have they no time to engage in such thoughts but went safely like those about whom the Lord said: The healthy do not need the physician. What a happy day it must be for such, the day they rise up from the beds well and with the strong conviction of the Sin's forgiveness which they cannot have without also first coming to the consciousness of their own infirmity, and felt the pressing burden of sin, and experienced how little their exterior good deeds benefit them, if they do not spring from interior love for and trust in the Savior.

This letter dear sister seems to be an expression of trust and love as well as happiness and cheer, love and trust as an effect of the long weakness which I believe must have caused you a heartfelt and devout adherence to Him who alone can and will heal both body and soul.

Your healing has effected for you happiness and cheer, for in it you have a clear sign that the Lord is with you and a certainty that He also will be with you in the future.

How I was surprised, however, by knowledge of your thoughts about following me to the far west. To me it would be an indescribable happiness to have you over here, but you must not put any weight on that, as neither can I give you any prompting to come; for it would not give me great happiness if I should be the cause of your coming, and you didn't find it to be up to you expectations, no, it would bring a great sorrow over me, if that should happen. You must yourself over weigh how it will be for you to forsake a quiet and happy home with relatives and friends, and come to a distant land among strange people with, for you, an unheard of language and customs and manners which seem to put a restraint on a Norwegian farmer's personal freedom, as far as speech and behavior are concerned, for Americans are more particular about such than the finest folk at home. Many think that this is bad, but I for my part like it.

But if you once have caught America-fever, I know how it is, then nothing at home tastes good. Father's and Mother's permission is then the only thing which will make you happy, and if you have come so far, dear Sister, so pray God to be with you and come, for there is enough work here for women. The pay is from 1 ½ to 2 ½ dollars per week here in the town for ordinary housework, as they are used to. In the country it can also be as low as 75 cents or 1 dollar but that I believe is only among the Norwegians. Where lady's sewing is concerned, they must usually work a couple of months without pay, which is called learning time. When that is over they get 3 dollars or more for a week, as well as food. But I believe you must learn the language first, for which cause it is necessary to work for a time with an American family.

I left the Halvor House in Minnesota the 11<sup>th</sup> last. They were good people. I got 5 dollars extra pay and a pair of stockings when I left. I began at school the 18<sup>th</sup> last. I pay E. H. Midtbøe 2 ½ dollars for board

and room. He is a parson for some small congregations around here. He greets you ver sincerely. Write soon what your decision is. If there is anything you want to know, just ask, and I will gladly answer. Greet Father and Mother and the family, as well as relatives and friends most lovingly. Finally you are most lovingly greeted from your always devoted brother

O. S. Houkom

(Marginal notes) I am healthy and strong for which I stand in great gratitude to the Lord.

This is a style of writing which I have taken from a Norwegian-American letter formula, published here. I think it is good, what do you think? My mistakes must not be blamed on the pattern.

My address is now again La Crosse. I thank you for the enclosed song. Tell Father Thanks for the two letters with enclosed photograph which were a great joy to me. I accept and thank for the offer of newspapers if it isn't too much expense.

O.S.H.

Translator's note: This letter, which was mailed in La Crosse, Wisconsin, on October 25, 1875, was postmarked on arrival in Skien, Norway on November 16, 1875, taking just one day over three weeks for the trip. Surface mail from the USA to Norway, or reverse, nowadays, (1985) takes two months or more. Air mail sometimes takes two or three weeks!

Olaf to Tarjer (Thora) 1/15/1877 and 1/23

Augsberg Seminary  
The 15<sup>th</sup> January 1877

My Dear Sister

Your unexpected but very welcome letter I received a few days after New Year, and only a few hours after I had posted a letter to Father which I hope has reached its destination. I therefore didn't expect a letter here before you had received one from me, as I can't remember having given any exact address; but I see you have guessed it quite correctly. The letter was unexpected and therefore doubly welcome. It is so much more pleasing for me, when it bears the stamp of a heart, which has felt the Lord's call, and speaks for a Sinner who has had his eyes opened to his lost condition and begun to rely on him without whose help we achieve nothing. Yes, when we can only see our deep downfall, our own inability and weakness, then will the Lord's grace be to us so much more precious and the Savior, who suffered death for our sins, be to us so much dearer; but self-love is so strong, and pride so commanding in our heart, that it is very difficult to acknowledge one's self to be nothing, and to take up the Yoke, of which Jesus says; that it is easy; but we would much rather help ourselves and seek our own honor in everything which happens to us.

(Sideways in the margin) I began this letter the 15<sup>th</sup>, and then school began, so I didn't get it finished before today, the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Now, as I have so recently written to Father, and told therein whatever I had to tell, I will now go over what is more necessary concerning your decision to come to America. I must then first state, that it will be both joy and comfort for me to have a dear Sister nearby, so we can converse together with comfort and admonishment, which are so precious and necessary for the soul which has reached the standpoint, when both the Devil, the World, and the Flesh rise up to destroy that life, which has begun to stir. But you must not consider what could please me, only take consideration for yourself and your own welfare. I hope you have considered well how it will be to forsake a dear Home in a peaceful valley and come out on a high plain where the wind blows from so many directions, that it is difficult to say, whence it comes or where it goes. If one had not found the rock, Jesus Christ, to hold on to and pray for his Spirit's Light to be able to discern the illusion, which can tempt one to put his confidence in, there can be a danger of being torn away by the storm, which rages around us. But at home in the peaceful valley is certainly no better for the spiritual life; for I seem to remember, that one sleeps so safely and peacefully within the walls of the State Church, and it was not so rarely, that those who awoke, heard abuse for their warnings. You see therefore that there are dangers in both places, but under the Lord's Wings you can live safely, wherever you are. So it can be a question, why you will come here; if it is a desire for goods and honor that drives you; then drive that desire from you; for it is sinful, and you can therefore not pray for the Lord's blessing on your decision but if it is for the sake of your health, your decision is commendable; for one should do what one can for the furthering of one's health.

I have also talked to a local Norwegian doctor about your sickness, as I was afraid that conditions here could be damaging for you. I received the answer that anemia is more prevalent in Norway than here and that the sea voyage would be a benefit to your health. But now the question is whether you will receive permission to travel from Father and Mother. I have now, I believe, in this and in my previous letter to you, given the necessary information, and you must now plead your cause before them. Much will depend on the situation at home, if it can be done, I hope they will not oppose it, but if they forbid you, it must be for a reason unknown to me, and it would therefore be wrong and unscrupulous of me to persuade them to act against their conscience. The remonstrances, which they make about the dangers,

which can be met on the journey and in the new home, will I pray them to leave along, for that is only a lack of faith. I know that the thought is not strange to them who remain at home: Perhaps you in one way or another might die on the sea, or in a railroad accident; but haven't the Savior's own lips said: "Not a sparrow falls to the earth without the Father's will". When we in the faith wander in the Lord's way, nothing but his will can overtake us.

Concerning traveling without known escort, I will say, that it is certainly more pleasant, and therefore preferable, to come in company with acquaintances, but that it involves more danger, is certainly not true. No matter how well traveled one is at home, it wouldn't help much, unless one knows the language. There is no danger of getting lost when one only follows carefully the advice and instructions which are given by the Travel Company, on whose ship one travels. But one must not listen to or obey any foreigners. Which would be best, to travel by Steamship or Sailing-ship, I believe you know better information about at home than I can give; but if you have the means for it the steamship is preferable because of the shorter travel time and better accommodations. From what I have heard about the various Lines, it would be best to choose between the "Norwegian" and the "American", as emigrants are well treated on both these Lines, and the Norwegian has also the advantage that it is direct, one doesn't have to travel over to England. In case you should come by sailing-ship, I will mention the 'eats' that I think are best: sheep meat, both roasted and dried, are good. Milk, cheese and whey cheese, especially sweet whey, tastes good and I missed potatoes very much, then all were gone. I didn't like sardines or ship's bread. Don't bring any more clothes than necessary to change during the trip, except for woollen underwear. Don't bring a decorated chest with you, it will be damaged on the journey. Don't use a padlock, it will be smashed easily. Preferably buy a through ticket to La Crosse; there I shall arrange for someone to meet you at first. Midtbøe will be glad to meet you, so you can get a good knowledge of his friendly hospitality.

I shall write some lines to you again in a while. A heartfelt greeting to Father and Mother and the family. You are lovingly greeted and commended to the Lord by your devoted Brother Olaf.

(Marginal notes) Write as soon as you have made a decision. I have just had a letter from Hans.

Paint on your chest you name and clearly: La Crosse, Wisconsin, North America

I thought about writing especially to Father and Mother and pray for you; but I thought it better, that you alone settled the matter among yourselves. This letter is therefore also the letter to give them true information which they can use in consideration in the matter's decision. Give yourself over to God and don't set yourself against Father and Mother, for I hope they act according to their conscience.

(The following translation is from an undated postcard, without greeting, bearing a picture of Augsburg Seminary; it may have been enclosed with the letter to Father (not available but referred to in the previous letter).

Write soon, for I shall be sorely longing for the reply to come back, and I would like several to write to me, as it is an extreme joy which exceeds all the joys of the world. I wish all of you a New Year Happy in the Lord.

Addr. Olaf S. Houkom  
Care Prof. S. Oftedal, Augsburg Sem.  
Minneapolis, Minn  
North America

Olaf to Tarjer (Thora) 2/19/1877

Augsberg Seminary  
The 19<sup>th</sup> February 1877

Precious Sister,

After promising to write to you again soon, I will send you a few lines to give you even more information, so that you, if you have decided to travel, can have something to guide you and so more confidently can undertake the journey. The fact is I have written to a family in La Crosse, whom I know well, and they will with the greatest willingness receive you in their house when you come. They are kind, pleasant folks, with whom you can be as safe as if you were at home. From there you can easily come out into the country to Midtbøe and there where I worked last summer. They are also good-living folks, who will strive to make you as comfortable as possible. In any case, I believe it will be best for you at first to live in the country, unless I should remain here in Minneapolis, which is a very healthful place, so you could certainly come here immediately, but there is little likelihood for that, as I believe I will try to get a couple of months school somewhere and after that go to the harvest. Meanwhile I shall inform the folk, where you are to come, where I am and later, what I think best for you.

Although I know how hard it is for Father and Mother to let you go, I hope however that I can see you and enjoy the company of a dear sister over here; as I believe that your health lies more closely on their hearts than having you with them. There is one more thing I have come to think about, and that is your situation compared with your environment at home. You have perhaps heard the Lord's Call to follow him and forsake the world's desires and joys in order to be happy in him who is the source of true happiness and eternal blessedness. It will be bad then, if you in any way in your present conditions should not be able to resist the temptations, which the many sinful customs offer one. Such temptations must be overcome, if we will find quiet and rest in the Lord. You will therefore perhaps have an advantage from changing the conditions, as here are found many faithful, who could stand by you with encouragement and guidance.

The 31<sup>st</sup> of last month I received my Father's letter. I will now take the first opportunity I have, to say to him my heartfelt thanks for his advice and exhortations. I see that he was moved to do much more than I deserved or expected. Tell him I have written S. Kirkebø, but not had an answer. Greet Father and Mother, family, relatives and friends most lovingly. Be now dear sister commended to the Lord's care. Live well!

Your always devoted Brother Olaf

(Marginal note) Don't neglect to advise me of what time you leave and on what ship. You could also as soon as you come to harbor send some lines to the Man in La Crosse Wis who is called John N. Karsrud. Take a lunch pack with you on the train, where there is always water to drink; and also Lokum.

Tarjer (Thora) to Parents 8/18/1879

Merchants Hotel the 18 Aust 79

Dear Parents:

My soul praise the Lord and forget not, all his goodness, he who has held his Hand over me across the great water. The words of David must in truth have surrounded me when we saw America's coast. We had helpful wind, food and drink, everything we needed and peaceful sleep at night, we needed no more from bodily respects; but we had visible proof of the Lord's strong arm, needed to lead us over the mountain-like great waters, which daily stormed towards us; yes I must in truth say that there was danger for the Christly minded youth, for the worldly minded there was peace and no danger, if there had not been such strong words the unclean Spirit would have taken the upper hand; but unmarried men and women had each their cabins, the women were fetched in the evening when the dancing went on too long, and if the boys wanted to follow them down they had to turn back if the watchman saw them. So I had no good female companionship. There was rather none I was so closely acquainted with, that they wore my style of clothing, only two little girls from Skafsabygd who were with their Father. The other few Norwegians among hundreds of women were a few from Gudbrandsdal and some from Sogn, that I became acquainted with them. However, we had the best company, namely a sailor from Brevig, who had sailed twice to America while he was at sea, but would now go to America to get work on the land. Yes, I saw it as a great God's good work, that he came in company with us, as we on the ship from England were so strange to all, and the reason that he was such good company for us, was the he was such a sincere Christian boy.

The day after we sailed from England it roughened a bit, so that many especially the women, were strongly attacked with seasickness, I was also smitten a little, but I got such good attention that I was soon over it again; as soon as day broke I went up on the deck, and immediately came the aforementioned sailor and asked me if I was well enough clothes, whether I had had food, if one stopped eating the seasickness took control, he said: so he went after food for me which would dispel the seasickness and fresh water to drink, and when it was later in the day and the wind became strong came an Englishman I think because I couldn't talk with him, with a thick wood blanket and threw it over me and some sliced bread which tasted very good to me. Yes, then I had to smile at him in wonder, when one so strange to me, had such compassion for me: I saw in this my Heavenly Father's care for me, his mercy surrounded me, so that a man came and asked me if I was Swedish, he wouldn't believe I was Norwegian when I was so brave on the sea, he said, because the Norwegian women were the most seasick. Yes, everything went exceptionally well for us on the journey, both by sea and land. As I believe that Thor has received a letter from Hans, in which he described in detail everything on the journey, I will skip over the 5 days land journey to 11 June, when we after 3 weeks travel from home had come to Minneapolis. On this same day began the Annual Meeting of the Conference, we went straight to the Church, for if possible to meet Olaf, if he had come to the meeting, from Vilmar, but he didn't come. But I've never felt myself so much at home as on that day, yes, it came over me that I could be in a church in Norway. They had for the text the 31<sup>st</sup> verse of John's Gospel 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter, if ye continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed etc. I thought this text especially applied to us, as newcomers, and when they began to sing in Landstad's Hymnal, the Hymn a Mighty Fortress is our God my Heart Rejoiced, on account of that excellent Hymn. When we came to Minneapolis we stayed with a widow a few days to get organized. This widow got a job for me here, whether I began by standing in the kitchen and washed dishes, but here I have had the hottest days I have ever lived, so much hotter air here than at home, but I think it was a good airing for me when I had to throw out the washing water, I broke out all over my face and neck, with small sores, but it saved me from an internal sickness said a Norwegian girl whom I now work with.

I stayed there a month, but then I went in to work together with this Norwegian, an old and Godfearing girl, we work in the same room, she washes and I iron for 8 dollars a month and food. I don't iron anything except bedclothes, tablecloths and serviettes, and handkerchiefs, but I have plenty of work with them, because there can be over 100 people here overnight and everything must be washed and ironed afterwards, every day there are 12 girls and 6 boys here at the hotel. All are Irish except for two Negroes, and everything is in English, so that here I have no one else to talk to except this Norwegian, whom I work with, but she is a gentle, old, Christian woman, so I can safely hold to her for everything until Olaf comes to the Seminary again.

I have still not become acquainted with any of Olaf's friends as I am not so familiar with the city that I can go far alone and we both have no opportunity to go; but I took this place because the Norwegian girl said it was very difficult for newcomers to get in with a family when they had had no training in washing and ironing, but if I am here a while she would teach me all kinds of ironing. Therefore nobody knows I have come, only Oftedal, Hans had a message for me from him that I should come to him, but I have still not had an opportunity to do so, but Hans went to him before he traveled to Olaf, as you probably know, as I hope you have received his letter from Vilmar. I am still healthy, which people say it is a wonder for a newcomer to be so well, yes it is truly a wonder for which I cannot possibly sufficiently thank the Lord. I must now break off. Greet acquaintances and friends and relatives from their hastily emigrated friend, but first and last you, family and parents, be greeted from your devoted daughter, Tarjer.

(Marginal notes) Thone must write when she has a chance, I am so busy, also Anne must write, it would please me, if she could collect many letters from her school comrades, when she sends it, she must then first and foremost greet them from me, and be yourself greeted little Anne.

You have certainly waited a long time for a letter from me, but I haven't previously completed it, although it is a long time since I began it.

When you will write to me, you will do best to address it to Oftedal just as to Olaf, as I don't know how long I will stay here at Maartsens Hotel. (That is how it is pronounced).

Olaf - fragment of Diary  
Augsburg Seminary  
May 1880

Saturday 1 Service 8-9 am  
Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> last month Norwegian (written)  
Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> English (written)  
Monday 26<sup>th</sup> Greek (written)  
Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> Latin (written)  
Subjects

Norwegian: "The relationship between people's history and literature"

English: "Singleness of Aim"

Greek: Aeta 8, 26-40 (to translate)

Latin: A story about Conon (..)

Neither the Greek nor the Latin had I translated before, nor ever heard the story about Conon.

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> we had free

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> oral examination in Greek and German; unlucky in German

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> Latin and English (oral)

Today we had a photograph taken (4 Greek class) in a group

Sunday 2. A clear sunny day. Prof. Oftedal preached over John 16, 23 #, on different types of prayer.  
Had dinner with Steinug. Very hot.

Monday 3.

(Nothing more written).

Olaf to Tarjer (Thora) 5/24/1880

Wilmar the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1880

Dear Sister:

We were granted the joyful experience of meeting again after so many years apart; we were also able to live together for a few months, but because of our differing work we couldn't benefit from the joys usual in being together, as we otherwise might have done. The time will come when we shall be free from our schools busy time; but the work in the Lord's vineyard called after us: Come soon! And we had to go. We didn't even have time to talk about what might fill our hearts. It seems to me namely that we still have much to talk to each other about; therefore I feel our parting so much more. Dear Tarjer! If there is anything you wished to ask or talk to be about, it would cause me great sorrow if you refrained from doing so, from bashfulness or any embarrassment. I wished often that we could have spent longer time together, to talk together about both our spiritual and our temporal welfare; but as I said both my own and your endeavors laid obstacles in the way. I could wish, that no other should allow himself to be so governed by the struggle as I, for I didn't give myself the time, which I should to gather from God's word's life-giving strength. I am therefore very glad and thankful to God because I have been released from the worst struggle.

I am also very busy now as I am namely keeping school every day, holy Sunday-school every Sunday afternoon and various other things which crop up occasionally. But I am well and the Lord who cares for my health will also stand by me in my spiritual work.

I have still not had a letter from Hans, I am longing to know how it is going with him in his new work. There can be no chance of him coming here for July 4<sup>th</sup>, as there are 50, 60 English miles between us, which would either have to walk or drive with a horse. But you must see that you come, if it is in any way possible. Pastor Paulson has told me that it will be celebrated in the same place and about in the same way as last year. It is very beautiful down here, and the people are obliging. It is in all ways very pleasant to be here, although I don't really like moving from place to place. Here I must break off, as the one who is to take the letter to the post office is waiting; live well! Hope in the Lord with all your heart.

Be lovingly greeted from  
Your devoted brother  
Olaf S. Houkom

When you come to La Crosse there is usually a Police Officer who meets immigrants. You can show him the back side of this paper and he will see that you come to the place you are directed, or to a Norwegian shop where you can ask someone to accompany you to your destination. If such a police officer should not be there, you must not be ashamed to go to the finest man you can see for of such a one you can expect the surest help.

Lovingly, your Brother,  
Olaf S. Houkom

(On the other side of the paper, in English)

Please show the bearer to the residence of  
John N. Karsrud on the corner of Pine and Fourteenth Sts.  
Or: L. Tollefsen, grocer, on  
Third Street, where she will get information of above

Olaf to Tarjer (Thora) 6/28/1881

Liverpool the 28<sup>th</sup> June 81

Dear Sister:

It is perhaps uncertain whether you can receive this letter before we come, but as I know that you very much wished to know about what time we come, I will since we have so much time, send you a few lines from here.

I must first of all tell you, that I have the pleasure to be accompanied by our dear brother Anders. We will probably both stop in Minneapolis for a day and then go on to Willmar. We also have in our group Inger, daughter of Gunder Skredder. She will be with us to Minneapolis, where she will seek work, and it will then be good for her, if you could find a place, where she could stay temporarily.

Else Mikkelssdatter Hauge from Vraadal is also traveling with us; but she is going to the Red River Valley.

We shall leave Liverpool with the steamship "Arizona", but unfortunately not before Saturday. The days will be long among such a motley crowd, which lies here waiting and is annoyed over the poor service.

I left home fourteen days ago, but then I was up in Tin, where I visited Pastor Weinaas and had a trip to Rjukan.

All at home were well when I left them. Our old parents again expressed the wish to be coming with us to America.

In Kristiania I met Miss Herslet who had just come home from America; she could tell me that you had begun to sew and live with Sessil

I hope that we shall meet in the middle of July. Everything else which you would be interested to know I must save until then. Greet Sessil and other acquaintances whom you have the opportunity to meet.

Be most heartily greeted from us all and first and foremost from

Your always devoted brother  
Olaf S. Houkom

Translator's note: Gunder Skredder means Gunder the Tailor. Some immigrants who had names of this type changed their names to the English work after emigrating, so possibly Inger became Inger Taylor (or Tailor), or she may have married before considering the possibility of a name translation. I mention this in case a reader has an acquaintance who may be descended from an emigrant who changed the last name in this way.

Anders to Parents 6/28/1881

Liverpool the 28 June 81

Dear Parents and family:

I have now the joy to tell you, that we are well and healthy and with good weather came to Hull on Sunday evening the 26<sup>th</sup>. We stayed on board till the morning. At 12 o'clock we fetched our clothes from the steamship and in on the railway wagons and everything was ready and so we set off and came to Liverpool about 7 o'clock in the afternoon. I have not been seasick only from Skien to Kristiania and not much then either. We are now in a hotel here and will not leave before Saturday for what reason we do not know whether the ship has not come here or it waits for more emigrants. We come to travel with Guion Lines biggest and best ship. Aslak sent with me 4.00 to the Norwegian Cooperative which I should take care of for him. I and Olaf were at the home of Johansen once but then it happened he wasn't home and we didn't have time later, but we shall arrange everything for the best when we meet Hans so he had better not start worrying before then.

I have enjoyed the trip so far so I can not sufficiently thank God for all the good he always pours over me with.

Yes, when one is out in the world's tumult among all kinds of people, then first feels one it is good to have a loving friend and Father who one can go to with all his lack and sorrows.

Inger and Else have been fairly well and happy. Here is such tumult and so full of people that it is hard to write here.

Olaf wrote a letter to Tarjer so he will delay writing till he gets over.

Be now most lovingly greeted from us all.

The Lord be with you all, this wishes you  
Anders

Anders to Brother Aslak 12/18/1881  
Willmar 18-12-81

Dear Brother

Summer and Autumn have already passed since I traveled at home and "on Woods and Fields the snow fell and cole it was out there". I think it is like that now at home. All the Summer and Autumn work is done and the sun gets lower and lower all the time, the long evenings come as before with the hearth and firelight, with reading and studying. Evening school and other amusements and fun. I am in America, as you well know, and am therefore in something entirely unfamiliar. Here it is not long till Christmas, but no snow, short evenings, warm weather so I can go out without gloves. Here are many fine small lakes in the settlement and it has been cold enough to form ice on them so I managed to try to skate a little which I must say is the only fun I have had since I left. Here in the settlement I have little young company and I have missed it, and long for it. I have gone here working and struggling, as all do here in the summer, and not had a single comrade to meet with in leisure time as I was so accustomed to at home, the only girls I see are when I gather with others in the Church and sing the old homelike hymns and hear the sermon and I have never gone from there without having felt the true happiness of hearing the Glad Tidings foretold and explained. Here they don't have many Summer excursions, the only thing they have is to take a horse or two and drive in on some flat woods; there is also good fresh air as you say; I have never been with one of these parties, but I have been many times alone in these woods and eaten my fill of gooseberries, plums, and wild grapes which are plentiful here but this can't be reckoned as much compared to the Brokefjell trip at home. Here there are many kind and Godfearing folk but here I am also quite an unfamiliar outsider and there are home-like Pastors I am already well acquainted with two of them.

In Summer, just after I came here, when Brother Olaf and I traveled around and looked for work on the way we me Pastor Paulsen who came driving in a buggy, (a sort of lightweight four-wheel wagon) and was going to the Church to set up a Gravestone on a grave of a child who had died, he asked us to turn back and set up the stone with him, yes we did and when we had done it, he drove us right over the prairie to four farmers and offered us to them as workmen and stayed with us so we were received as the best guests. Now I am at the home of a man from Vinje Parish, Olaf Aslaksen, whom I wrote about in the letter to Father, and I shall go to English School for 3 months. It is the most hospitable family I have ever been with. He has two boys and a girl at home, the one boy is to be teacher at the school I shall attend. Every evening he gathers as around him and holds service and prayers and every Sunday morning we are gathered for Hymn singing, reading the glad tidings, and prayer, so he has a great organ which the boy and the girl can play on so we play and sing two-part and three part songs.

Yes Aslak now you have certainly begun School again and strive with your lessons, but don't be too eager, watch that you do not overwork at your reading, which can put too much strain on your chest. It is strange to be so far from home, from much that is dear, from beloved memories there at home, how many good wishes are certainly not offered all this, how good was it not, as Olaf said to you the evening before he left, how good was it not to think that we were all gathered together in the Lord. Yes, you probably don't realize how much good one has in over-abundance for the dear, unforgettable home, when one is so far away from it. I must go back to my new home for here have I got a feeling I have never felt before and for another thing there is something I so deeply wish was present there at home, namely that the life together was a life of love, a life in God, yes then was life down here a wandering to the glad banquet which is waiting. Yes, when I can just express it as I feel it, that life down here is a yes and amen and a hope for the joy of meeting again after this life.

These are not new thoughts for me, no I have borne these thoughts for a long time, but it is the

unbreakable band of love which binds a family together which gives me strength to hope and wish this. It is this I have felt a little of in this family and grant God it some day will be so there at home also, it was so good to think about yesterday evening when I came from school, I went into town to enquire about a letter. Yes there was finally a comforting letter for me and it was finally at home. You can imagine how glad I was, I couldn't refrain myself, I must open it there in the post office and found there letters from Tone and Aslak, but it was already getting dark and I had to hurry home, so I didn't have time to read it. On the way home, as was natural to think about you all there at home, and so I remembered that there was only a few days till Christmas, which there wasn't any kind of sign of, either in the weather or in work and I wasn't free from wishing to be home with you and the child-years I lived there. With these thoughts I came home and sat down to read with the greatest desire. It is wonderful how a heart softens when one meets the same heartfelt thoughts and feelings from another as one's self bears and I found them in these dear letters. While I sat and read one of the boys here began to play four part "Sinner" and "Always Blessed", yes, then I couldn't do other than remember the happy Sundays from last Spring when I worked with "Straight Forward" and you let these beautiful harmonies stream down over me from the bedroom so I often had wonderful feelings which were blended from the wish for peace and longing on truth and the seriousness of life there at home. This wish and this longing it was I want to seek for, but oh dear, here is wishing, here is longing, wherever one wanders in the world; but it is comforting that these disappointments create seriousness and the longing for a better life. I have not talked with Hans as we haven't had a chance as it has been too expensive to travel to each other (but we have exchanged letters) so I can't answer your questions. With reference to the bodily, I can't complain, as one can almost say that here there are opportunities for all kinds of progress. As far as the rest is concerned you can see in the letter, though the work is heavy. Be now all of you most lovingly greeted and so are you most sincerely greeted from your always devoted

Brother Anders.

(Marginal notes on all eight pages).

I began this letter fourteen days ago, as you can see.

I have not had any letter from Father yet.

I think I shall soon answer Tone's letter, also. Greet all acquaintances.

I wish you all a Happy New Year. "Merry Christmas" probably comes too late.

It makes me feel bad that you have been bothered by my neglect. But I shall remember it.

The address for Hans is Olaf's old one, Augsb. Seminary, Minne. Minn.

I cannot remember getting any money from Olaf Midtsund. You can ask him.

Great Anne and Olaf Salteveje from me and other relatives.

Tone to Tarjer 2/24/1883

Midtsund

My Dear Sister

Yes now it is soon four months since I received a letter from you, I am the same old careless one you remember me, certainly. Your letters did me such good, they both warn cheer and comfort, yes I thank you very much for your good letters, think if only I also can make you glad with such letters, but I can't, you must have thanks you who have it I don't have it alas. We are well God be praised and thanked therefore but here in the Parish many are sick I don't know how many are dying here of pneumonia it rages much here, it is thought it comes of the wet Summer and the strong wind. It is true as you say Tarjer that one doesn't think so much of the blessing of being a big family until one is parted from the others, then first one feels the right love for each other, yes it is different to think back, it happened not so seldom that we squabbled when we were all at home together but first when we get away from each other it is all forgotten. I tease all those who do good towards me yes I have many times sat alone and sung the song "Now we must say Farewell" for at that time it is just as if I feel you, but I hope that a glance and a smile shall meet with real eyes.

Teacher Anvik has begun an evening school now which I and little Anne go to, it is every Wednesday and Saturday evening it should be from 6 o'clock to 8 o'clock but he is so enthusiastic that sometimes we don't come home before 10 o'clock yes it is a clever teacher with all this we have learned much about here. I am very glad because we shall move to Haukom in the Spring, because I am so tired of all this moving back and forth which we have done now for these three years. Yes Haukom is the dearest place I ever come to know if I can be there all my time I shall not beg after America that I have always said, but in case God lets me live a long life I know that I will not stay there, therefore I thought it would be easier for me over there, but there I probably think wrong as I see from your letter so I think it so bad to leave Father and Mother when they are old. I must always read American letters for Mother but I have still never read a letter for her without her crying and it makes me feel so bad that I can't hold back the tears either. As we don't have any servants this year except maybe a boy they are able to do some brewing whenever they need to have because now Anne is a grown-up girl, you shall see. Anne Saltevje was brought to bed with a big girl eight days ago, she is well and resembles the others at Saltevje. Greet Inger kindly from me but you are most lovingly greeted from me. God be with you is the wish of your sister Tone.

(Marginal notes on all four pages):

Many thousands thanks for the fine Violin strings I received from you, I am so glad to have them. Now I am weaving on the sewing cloth which we spun for when you were home. How do you like your towel; we like perhaps grey it would be very fine. Others are probably waiting for a letter as I think but I don't think it will be long before I write. Greet the other relatives from all of us together.

Olaf to Tarjer 8/1/1883

Dalton, Minn, the 1<sup>st</sup> Aug 1883

Dear Sister

You were surprised, I expect, when I did not come to the annual meeting. I hope you have heard the reason, which was that I undertook so much of a school that I couldn't take off time for it; for I must see about getting myself finished with 3 months school before the harvest. You probably had a good time at annual meeting I expect. I had a greeting from you through Pastor Iverson, thank you. There was apparently considerable dissension at this meeting, but I think there is a good ground to be pleased with the outcome. I was not so little annoyed that I couldn't be present, in the days when the meeting took place, especially when I heard how Prof. Gunnarsen had distorted and misinterpreted the students' writings to the annual meeting of the Conference. But it went as it should, when it came back over himself, poor Gunnarsen! He must certainly have been misled by somebody, for I had not expected anything like that of him.

I have had a well intended school. In the first month I had over 30 school children and since I have had over 40. But they are fairly uneven, so there are some so kind and clever that I have scarcely had their match, others are very undisciplined and some very lazy. That is also about what I can say about the people here. I preach also now and then on Sundays, but usually it is hard for me, that I am still in doubt if it is the best I can do for God's Kingdom's cause to be a pastor. I would much rather be satisfied with a less esteemed position in the Church, when in such I could do more good. Pray for me dear sister, that I may come to see more clearly in this matter!

It pleases me much to hear that you are in good health and condition and that it is easier for you now. As far as my health is concerned, this summer has been unusually good.

It pleases me much to hear that you are in good health and condition and that it is easier for you now. As far as my health is concerned this summer has been unusually good.

I probably won't come back to the school before the 1<sup>st</sup> October, as I can have a school right up to that time and perhaps longer if I wish.

Greet acquaintances from me.

Be most heartily greeted from your always devoted

Brother Olaf

Add. Dalton, Otter Tail Co., Minn.

Olaf to Tarjer

Manvel, Grand Forks Co. Dakota  
The 26<sup>th</sup> Aug 1884

Dear Sister:

It is now so long since we parted, that it is time for me think about my promise to send you a few lines.

That I have happily reached my destination, and that I since have had my usual good health, which I in general can be glad about, you have known from my greetings through Swenson, just as I have received your greetings through his "post cards".

You are probably wondering, I expect, how I am getting along here. I must say, there is plenty here which makes it unpleasant, but I still have not reached the point of wishing to be somewhere else. Spiritual Death seems to reign over all here, so that I don't know whether I have met more than two people who have confessed a need for the Savior; there may be a few more who sign after him in secret, without my eye or any other human eye having noticed it, but the Lord grant that they are many, and that they may receive grace to shine like the city set on a hill. You can also realize, that I, in a way, feel very lonely, but not so much that I am miserable; because at the same time I feel that the Lord has set me in this place, to do what I can to draw poor sinners to the Wisdom of Jesus; patience and a humble mind are what I must daily pray for, to perform this task, and God be praised, I am strengthened by the hope that, with his assistance I can do a little.

Last week I went with Pastor Lundeby on a mission trip north of Devil's Lake about 100 miles west of here. It is two years since Norwegians began to settle in that area, and now one can travel for days over the prairie and see small black huts everywhere, most inhabited by our countrymen. The huts are either built of turf, or of boards covered outside with tarpaper. The poor settlers certainly lack much, both in spiritual and material respects of which people in the older settlements have rich resources to draw from, but which they forget to thank God for, as long as they have it. But it is encouraging to experience how satisfied the new settlers are when they have obtained a piece of land, and how happy they are when a servant of the word creeps into their huts with a message of peace.

As far as I remember, you once borrowed from me Pontoppidan's "Truth of Godliness", "the great Explanation", as it is also called; will you be so kind as to sent it to me, and the melody book for Homeland's Songs, which you certainly have also. You can probably get Swenson to pack them and send them if you just pay the postage, which I will repay later.

I think it is too bad that I shall retain so much of your money for such a long time, but I can't get my pay until near Christmas. I will then try to repay you some of it. Greet Swenson and the children from me, as well as Gunnar and Inga, and others who would enjoy hearing from me.

Herewith be lovingly greeted from your always devoted brother.

O. S. Houkom

A. Houkom to Svennung O. Houkom 12/5/1885

(Translator's Note: There is no heading to this letter. I am working from a machine copy, not the original, and there are copies of the back and front of the envelope. The front is postmarked at Porsgrund with the date 6XII85, and the back at Skien with the same date. I suspect that the writer is Svennung's youngest (?) Brother, Aslak, and concerns sale of some of the timber from the hills around Houkom. I am not sure of the significance of the numbers he quotes. Each pair of numbers is divided by a symbol like a long thin V hanging below the line. Sometimes there is a sort of hook on the side of this symbol. I cannot reproduce it with a typewriter.)

Dear Brother,

Enclosed is sent a Business Contract and Kr.190. I took the Liberty of borrowing the remainder until Wednesday, as I just must have some in the afternoon and can not have the money, I expect, before Tuesday. I send less than 200 Kr., because the commission was cheaper. Yesterday I went out to Koch. He will by no means buy, before he has seen the Timber. He will quote 6v6 and 8v6 as the lowest Price, so it should remain until Hans Gundersen comes up in 8 or 14 days. His son has previously bought from you he said and been all the way up to Heivandet and seen the timber, he said, and what he then got was such ordinary quality he will not buy unless I have it for 6v12 and 8v12. I went away very dissatisfied and regretted that I had taken the business on myself. As soon as I came home I went to Rasmussen, who I think is a rarely fine and friendly man and after some polite chat I got him to offer 6v12 and 8v12. I demanded 7 and 9. He assured me that he would not buy more, but as most of it is only fir and passable lot it was this finally. I then got on to 6v9 on undersized. As soon as we were finished and I had barely got the contract and order in my pocket said the son Rasmus, who wrote the contract; there come two who also want to sell timber. Who was it? Hans Herbjørbsrud and - I forget the name - Now I won't buy any more, even if you sell it at half price, said the old man, and went right out from me. I went out happy over for once having undeniably come at the right time. Today I have been in Skien and raised the money and done a cattle transaction. I would rather have received a little on our old account, but I suppose, that you are just as embarrassed as I and I shall therefore send the remainder Wednesday, if nothing goes wrong with my money. But so must you definitely promise me, and that I won't let go of, that we get everything settled up in the Spring, when you have the amount.

All well, sincerely

A. Houkom

5/12 85

(In a letter from Svennung to his son Aslak, in August 1886, he writes "Brother Aslak's business arrangements give me grey hairs on my head. My credit is, because of this, completely ruined, and so it is not easy for a debt burdened man to clear himself.")

Olaf to Thora 2/1/1886

Manvel, Dak. The 1<sup>st</sup> Feb. '86

Dear Sister!

Herewith I send you a draft for 60 Dolls. And 38 cents in stamps. Of this \$60.38 I must ask you to pay our 3 Dolls. to some papers namely; 1 Doll to "Lutheraneren" and 1 Doll to "Folkebladet" for me, also 1 Doll to "Lutheraneren" for Mrs. Martin Sand, Warren P.O. Marshal Co. Minn. The remainder \$57.38 is for you as payment for my old debt; how should I not have wished that I could have repaid the whole, but it is quite uncertain whether I can pay more within one year. That which I have borrowed from you is altogether @128. As I have figured it. I think I will pay you the same interest, as you could get from "Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank" for the time I have borrowed the money, namely 6 per cent and add the interest to the capital every half year. So I get the whole interest in Dec. '85 to be \$29.38 - also the capital \$128. and interest \$29.38, together is \$157.38. You will herewith understand, that there now remains exactly 100 Dolls. I shall still pay you the same interest, which you could get, if you put your money in "Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank", which I believe is at present 5 per cent, if you will be satisfied with such low interest. It would be best if you would let Swenson put your money in the bank, if you have no use for it for a while. You can also get him to take care of this draft for you.

You have probably heard about the terrible happenings here in the settlement! Yes - think! That man in whose house I have lived for more than a year now sits behind lock and bars awaiting his doom because he has taken a person's life. In a quarrel on the road to town, almost arrived at the neighbor's house, he pulled a pistol out of his pocket and shot his opponent, called Little Halvor, dead immediately. It was December 21<sup>st</sup>.

About a week after I heard that a man who lived about 3 miles from here, had on Sunday between Christmas and New Year, at "high Mass time", committed suicide with the help of a rifle, which he fired against his forehead. His wife is left with 7 small children in poor circumstances, although people have done not so little for her.

God grant that I never have such a Christmas again!

Since New Year I have had a fairly bad cold for a long time, but I am somewhat better now.

Greet Anders, Swenson, and the children and be yourself greeted most lovingly.

A Blessed New Year in the Lord is wished all of you,  
Your devoted brother

Olaf S. Houkom

P.S. For better understanding I am putting in a special piece of paper about how the 3 Dolls. are to be used. O.S.H.

(The envelope is addressed to Miss Thora Houkom, c/o Mr. L. Swenson, Augsburg Sem., Minneapolis, Minn.)

Aslak Svennungsen Houkom to Parents 6/23/1886

Liverpool 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1886  
Dear Parents and Sister!

We are now God be praised in good safety arrived in Liverpool. We have had fine weather the whole time except from Skien to Kristiania; then we had not so little storm, from which we all were more or less seasick. As you know we were in Kristiania till Friday so we got well organized. Friday afternoon at 5 o'clock we left Kristiania, arrived at Kristiansand Saturday morning just as we woke up in our bunks. So we left Kr.sand Saturday morning, spent the night in the middle of the North Sea; Sunday afternoon at 5 o'clock we could see England. At 7:30 o'clock we were in Hull Harbor. We stayed on board overnight. Monday morning was spent arranging railway tickets. 1.30 o'clock Monday we drove on the train from Hull and came here to Liverpool at 8.00 o'clock the same day. It was a fairly enjoyable trip partly above ground and partly underground. Here it is very beautiful in England. The fields are cultivated like the most fruitful Gardens with grand cities among them. We cannot complain about the food because we get enough, but the coffee is bad, so most of us make our own coffee. We have now had lodgings at an emigrant hotel and will be here till tomorrow Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>. We have it pretty good here. Olaf's foot is now somewhat better but he has still not tried to put a shoe on it; he has used cloths soaked in Goulard's extract on it. Anne is better now than when she left. Little Sveinung has hard spasms of Whooping Cough; but is lively and happy in between. Ragna was ver sick coming over the North Sea, she ate nothing the whole trip: Anne and Thone were not very well, as they had no appetite, we others were quite well.

Tomorrow Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June we leave here on the steamship Adriatic; it is supposed to be a very good ship.

On this trip we have made we have nothing to complain about except the coffee and the disorder which was allowed on board across the North Sea, when namely, boys and girls could unchallenged lie with each other in their bunks. We will be finished with this disorder across the Atlantic Ocean. We (especially Hans) have trouble getting along with Olaf Salteveje. He demands much help.

I must finish as it is impossible to sit here any longer because of all the tumult. It is impossible to concentrate here when some falter with their hands and come and sit on the table where I write others play on accordions others dance and jump so here is a tumult so one is nearly deafened; therefore there is no coherence in this letter. ---

You must then be most lovingly greeted from us all.  
Your devoted Aslak

Greet friends and relatives from me.

Greet Kristofer that the ring is not gold, even if 14K is written in it. It is almost yellow of copper rust.  
The same

Translator's Note: According to a letter from Olaf in 1880 Hans was living in America. From this letter it seems as if he returned to Norway to bring more of the family to the States, including sisters Thone (Tone) and Anne. This is the oldest sister, and the Olaf in this letter is her husband, and possibly also cousin, Olaf Salteveje. (Their Mother was Marie Salteveje). It seems amazing that the authorities would allow a small child to travel on crowded ships while suffering from whooping cough. Times were different then! The word I have translated as Goulard's extract is Blyvatn, or Lead Water. When my mother sprained her ankle on our visit to Norway in 1948 the waitress at the hotel brought Blyvatn (we didn't know what it was) and cloths, and it helped mother greatly.

Aslak to Parents 7/3/1886

Stm Shp Adriatic 3 July 1886

Dear Parents and Sister!

Now we are God be praised come so near New York that we have taken the Pilot on board and will, so we are told, be in harbor this evening or tonight. We have had perfectly fine weather across the Atlantic. We have had very little storm. A great many have been sick but none of us neither Olaf, Mikkel, Hans or I have been sick. Anne has been seasick sometimes Tone also a little. Ragna has been well now. It has gone very slowly, I think; it is partly because we have had headwinds the whole time, partly because we are on a slow boat. A little while ago we passed the sunken steamship "Oregon"; it actually lies in such shallows the mast tops stick up. It was a sorrowful sight.

You can believe it has been a tiring trip. We are now delighted with the result of the journeys we have made. In England we saw our suitcases and chests again, and we hope therefore that we have them with us. Anne is now quit of her cough. The rest of us are well except for Sveinung who has Whooping Cough as you know. I am now lying in my bunk to write. My small suitcase serves as a desk. Here there is no good opportunity to write. We shall be in New York till Monday, so we are told. Hans and Ragna and I will travel to Audubon while Tone will stay in Minneapolis. Hans and I will also be in Minneapolis a couple of days before we go on to Audubon. Olaf and Mikkel with their families bid me to greet you; also to greet all in Flaabygd that all has gone well.

Here it is so horribly hot down in my cabin that the sweat drips off my nose; I must therefore finish with a loving greeting to you from us all.

Greet friends and relatives

Your Aslak Houkom

When I reach somewhere peaceful I shall write a more detailed letter.

The same.

Aslak to Parents 7/10/1886

Lie the 10<sup>th</sup> July 1886

Dear Parents and Sister!

I hope you have received the lines I wrote, while we were in England. So you know, how the journey was to there. 24<sup>th</sup> June, St. Hans Day, we were to go on board the steamsh. "Adriatic". We were therefore awakened early that morning 5 or 6 o'clock we ate, then we had to go to the railway station so that each should take his things out of a huge heap of suitcases and mattresses and bedding there. It was a serious business: all crept and crawled in the heap after his own like ants in an anthill, suitcases tumbled down from the top and burst open so Lefse and Butterboxes rolled out the dock; then they were loaded on a large wagon all together and driven on the dock. There again was a pulling and tugging after mattresses and suitcases. Then, overloaded as we were, we were herded together like sheep on board a boat which would take us on board "Adriatic". All this running between stations and docks had taken a long time, so it was late in the afternoon before we got organized on board. We were therefore horribly hungry before we got any food; we got a small piece of meat with a few potatoes; this was naturally not enough so we were dissatisfied and demanded more; we got also a few biscuits with much scolding. The first two days we got far too little food; but when we threatened to complain to the doctor we got enough, of a sort. As you can imagine there was much annoyance and uproar among so many nations. There were not many Norwegians, perhaps about 40 but there were many Swedes. There were also many other nations; Russians, Finns, Poles, Germans, yes even Prussians; It is said there were about 500 Irish. Most of them are intolerable and impudent folk. They are much like the Gipsy tribes in Norway. Altogether there were over 1,000 people on board the Adriatic. We had beautiful weather but a headwind. There were some who were seasick; but in our group none of the men were sick; the women were also, most of the time, well. Anne was quit of her cough on the sea, which we were very happy about. Whooping Cough still bothered Sveinung; though he didn't seem any worse now than in the beginning.

Saturday afternoon the 3<sup>rd</sup> July we came to New York; we stayed on board that night also; which I shall not soon forget. Then we really felt we had come to Hot America. We lay and sweated in our bunks so we almost couldn't sleep. Sunday morning we were up at 3 o'clock and immediately we were in the mob with each other with mattresses, bedclothes and suitcases. When we finally got on land we had to go on board a steam ferry which took us to Castle Garden. What we went through there I cannot easily describe. We were chased from one room to another with all our stuff, from one ticket clerk to another continually and all were angry and tired. The people at Castle Garden (Agents and Ticket Clerks) all seemed to have fun making it difficult for the immigrants. After all possible and impossible fatigues we finally got on the train the same day. That we got there that day we can thank a boy from Kristiania for. We became acquainted with him on the trip. I and Hans had bunks alongside him. Now when the suitcases were weighed at Castle Garden we all had overweight. But what could we do? None of us had enough money. Olaf bought so much in Kristiania that he had only a few Kroner left of his reserve. When one travels one must be careful not to have overweight as that is shamelessly expensive. Hans and I therefore borrowed from the Kristiania boy, although he didn't have much more. Olaf also borrowed a little from him. Tone borrowed from a girl from Østerdalen. Olaf had to pay about 12 dollars, Mikkel almost 3, Hans and Ragna about 10, Thone 4½ and I almost 3 dollars in overweight. Olaf and Mikkel had bought tickets to Rutchfurt Wic., Thone to Mineapolis, I, Hans and Ragna had taken tickets here to Audubon; so we had company to Cikago; there we parted from Olaf, Mikkel and Thone. (Translator's Note: The place name spellings in the last few lines are as Aslak wrote them; not typing errors.)

Aslak to Parents 7/10/1886

This was unplanned for us as we thought, we could be together to Mineapolis. In Cicago we met several who had travelled with the Allen Line and also landed in Quebec; They had had it fairly good. Nothing was weighed, so they missed having to pay for overweight. They had enjoyed themselves better on the sea trip than we had. Wednesday morning the 7/7 we (I, Hans and Ragna) were in St. Paul; there we should have stayed till 8.30 o'clock that evening. We asked therefore that instead of staying in the emigrants' house in St. Paul we might visit Tarjer and Thone in Mineapolis, which we received permission to do; it was only a 45 minute drive on the train. We had to walk about two miles from the railroad station to Swendson's house, where Tarjer lives. When we reached Tarjer Thone had just come. It was a great joy to see each other again. Tarjer is well and looks good. She almost looks younger than Thone. She said she wouldn't have know me again. Thone was already in great spirits over her position. Actually she learned from Tarjer that she should go to Olaf to be his housekeeper. The fact is, Olaf wants a house of his own. Tarjer is therefore to go with Thone west to Olaf and get her started. Thone was very happy about this, and now it seems she was to receive three dresses from Tarjer, so you can be sure, that Thone was very happy. Thursday evening the 8<sup>th</sup> July would Tarjer and Thone travel west to Olaf; when Tarjer had been with Olaf a while she would return. She would arrange her route through Audubon to visit us here at Lie. Thursday morning I, Hans and Ragna came here to Lie, where we now are and have everything both good and comfortable. You can be sure it is well worth coming to folk and being able to rest after such a long journey together with so many beasts.

Tomorrow, Sunday, I and Hans shall go to a farmer to get work with him. He was here today to talk with us; but nothing was settled. We shall try to make an agreement with him.

In Mineapolis we visited Gunnar Torvildsen; he has serious trouble with his foot, which he has broken out of joint and not got it back in again. He stays in bed most of the time. Gunhild his daughter is dead. She died in childbirth on Rogation Day. She was after a fashion married to a widower. She had twins, one of which survives her.

Olaf and Mikkel bade me to greet you; actually I wrote a letter on board in New York harbor which Hans got; but in all the tumult we forgot to deliver it. Hans and Ragna bid me to greet you most affectionately. Ragna thanks you so much father for the spinning wheel. Greet friends and relatives. Yourselves are most lovingly greeted from your

A. S. Houkom

(Upside down) Write soon from Home; my address is Audubon P.O. Becker Co. Minn.

Translator's Note: I have tried to copy Aslak's spelling of names very carefully, and must point out that he uses both Tone and Thone for his sister, and Cikago as well as Cicago, plus other variants. I have no proof, but I wonder whether the Ragna mentioned here was Hans' wife. Later letters refer to his wife, without name, and mention that she took a trip home to Telemark. These hints, and the fact that Hans' father gave her a spinning wheel, as well as her traveling all the way with Hans and Aslak, suggest that they were perhaps engaged back in Norway. Perhaps some family member can supply more certain information about this.

Aslak to Parents 8/3/1886

Translator's Note: The contents of this letter make it obvious that Aslak has made a mistake when he wrote July. It has to be August. The events he mentions follow those he wrote about on July 10 in the last letter; therefore I am listing it as August.

Audubon, Becker Co. 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug 1886

Dear Parents!

Since I now have an opportunity to write you a few more lines, I will not let it go unused. I wrote in my previous letter which I now hope you have received, that I and Hans should try to get work with a man here in the neighborhood; but we didn't, because he only needed one. So I was the one he hired. I should be with him for two months for 24 Dol. Pr. Mn. But I was there only 2 weeks; as I got an ache in my hand (left) which made me stop. All the previous week I had no appetite and have been here at Li the whole time where I have lacked nothing; but had everything just as at home. Although lying idle is wasting money, I am glad however that it happened this way, as it was a very strict man I was with. He had a farm in Red River in Norman Co. and I should have been there for the harvest, but I missed that as the storm destroyed all his acres (about 3,000 Dolls loss for him), but he can easily stand it as he is very rich. Now my hand is almost better and then I shall go to a man from Trondheim to work and there be neighbor to Hans, who is also with a man from Trondheim 4 or 5 English miles from Li. I have had a letter from Olaf Salteveje. They will be with his brother Hans till the spring. He writes that there is little work. I have long since written to Brother Anders, but still had no answer; perhaps he has moved. We haven't heard anything from Olaf and Thone either. It is bad to be so spread around and not hear from each other. You probably wish to know how I have liked it, the time that I have been here, and so I must say, it hasn't been too strange. The time, I have been here at Li has been all right; but the two weeks, I was with the aforementioned man, were very long; for all the work is so very different here from that in dear old Norway. Everyone has his own ways here. I had never realized how great the difference is. I am longing to hear how you are now, dear parents, if you really have the desire to come after us to America and if you have in that direction taken any steps since we left. I scarcely thing that you will thrive here in America, you who are so old and accustomed to Norwegian conduct; but there is perhaps no other expedient, and so we will all certainly work so that you have everything you are used to as nearly as possible. But if you are reluctant to forsake the Fatherland (Houkom you are certainly forced to leave) and you have a chance in sight to stay there so just write your thoughts and I shall do what I can to help it through; I certainly thing the others of us will go along with that. On the journey over I thought often that it would have been troublesome for you, especially for you Mother, who are so often plagued with rheumatism in your legs. It is not so easy to speak either for or against in such a case. But I do say, that it is more spacious to live here than in Norway, even though it is a time of scanty fare at present. But truly it depends on a farmer being careful, here also; for there is much outlay for machines and tools; a man can not make his tools himself as he can in Norway; almost everything must be bought. As I said, just write and say how you would prefer to have everything arranged; for I think it is very bad to drag you away from all your accustomed ways, if it is within my power to help with anything. I think, however, that I will be able to live a life free from worry if you come, (that is, as far as caring for necessities is concerned); for we will all give you the help we can. Then write immediately, if you have not already written about this. Greet relatives and friends from me! But you are the most lovingly greeted from your devoted son Aslak.

(Marginal note:) I must bid you. Anne, to be so good as to write to me immediately first and foremost about home and also about other things in the town all, all is of interest now for me.

Svennung to his Children 8/13/1886

Hvideseid the 13<sup>th</sup> Aug 1886

Dear Children:

Thank you for the letters Aslak! It gladdens us in truth much to hear that you all after such a long and troublesome journey however finally happily and well are arrived at your destinations in the greatly praised America. May you all now find what you sought, namely: a good future home so the journey's goal will be well fulfilled, and the old with all their troubles and worries will soon be forgotten. I have the joy to be able to tell you that we are all healthy and live well, even though it is somewhat busy now in the Hay making season. I have only little Guttorm Kaasen as helper, he is still somewhat lame, but we have managed fairly well as I have leased a 3 or 4 teig piece of mowing so we are now nearly finished with the cutting, and have already begun the timber cutting. We have had especially good hay weather, rain now and then, but rarely has it lasted more than a day, also, we have had wind and sunshine. The hay crop will be small because of drought since spring, and the distressing spring pasturing, but the hay is exceptionally good. The corn (Translator's note: The word 'corn' in Europe refers to wheat, oats, barley, or rye, whichever grows best in the various regions. It does not refer to American corn, or corn-on-the-cob, which over there is usually called maize.) and potato fields stand especially beautiful, so that if the weather is still lucky for the in-gathering we can reckon on a good corn and potato year. You have probably learned that the great canal work between Ulefoss and Strangen was unanimously passed in the Storting. We can well hope that this will have its great influence on the livelihood and property prices here in Upper Telemark, which is desperately needed, and everyone thinks it has affected Halvor Napor, for he has now persuaded himself to add 500 Kr. to his previous offer. Recently I have also had another businessman, namely; Olaf G. Graver, he was on a trip home and will soon come back and have with him either his father or Aavold Ormtvedt to whose daughter he is married. I shall then see how bold he is, but I don't believe I will now sell under 12,000 Kr. for I believe surely that property prices will now climb. My inheritance right to Saltevje I now believe also will begin to have value; perhaps not so insignificant yet. If I could only struggle on for a couple of years with my debt obligations it would doubtlessly be a great advantage for me, but Brother Aslak's business arrangements give me grey hairs on my head. My credit is, because of this, completely ruined, and so it is not easy for a debt burdened man to clear himself.

A terrifying accident has recently struck our market town Skien. Last week Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> wildfire broke out and laid the whole town from the Railroad Station and up to the Bank of Norway in ashes. Even the Church and the Latin School have gone with it. Only a section on Bratsbergkleven and Klosterhaugene still stand, as well as the old Bank of Norway. Also Kragerø Town has had a great fire, whereby about half the town is destroyed. These disasters as well as the canal need a great work force, so here certainly must be a great work movement in Telemark. And it is certain that such great town rebuilding will have an influence on freight prices up here, which are highly needed. As time doesn't permit me to write more I must end herewith this time, with a loving greeting from us to you all, and I remain always yours as before.

Obliged

S. O. Houkom

Anders to Aslak 8/24/1886

Manvel, Grand Forks  
Dak. 24 Aug. 1886

Dear Brother!

Welcome to America!

I understand you are not happy, you tall student, office worker, and violinist from old mother Norway, where you sat up in the moss-grown Yggdrasil behind Haukom house and played from Fykeruens long tunes on the Hardanger fiddle so old Sveinong must rear up and listen. Life up your head you active boy! It was good you came. If you don't like the people over here, yes you must have been in Seljord so much that Ullmann has managed to set on you a pair of wings with which you can raise yourself up over the plains here and in poetic intoxication consider the beauties, the cultivations, the promise in the Norwegian folk life. Now brother, you have dreamed enough. We live in dreams in Norway. The melodies of waterfalls, the fiddler's tones, Ullmann's stories and Poet's songs lull us into its blessed dream kingdom. The longing for the white mountains comes over us no matter what meets us, yes if reality is so dark so sick so prosaic so pretentious and shouts only work, work and again work. Here it is necessary to lift your head in hope or to be broken.

Therefore: fresh courage!

It is true what you write about father and mother. Something must be done for them. I thought we would be quit with all this business now, at least I have had the steadfast hope the last 2 years. But if we are to do anything for them, we must guard ourselves against old-woman fuss and old-woman behavior; and I would like to say more but -----

Just the same for again and again to have bent at both ends in everything we would do for them and for each other.

I met Thora and Thone at the station with Olaf's team and buggy, since we have been together here.

A day's pay here is 1.50 Dollar during threshing. I will not advise you to come here out west as here it is even more melancholy concerning both people and the place. I heard you had three fiddles with you. I should like to get hold of a Hardanger fiddle. It is in the middle of stacking and very busy - so the letter - as you see - is written in great haste. Hearty greetings from

Your B. Anders.

(Marginal Notes:) Your letter was addressed to Hillsboro Walesh Co. I was in Manvel. Hillsboro is not in Wal. Co. but in Traill Co. therefore it took such a long time before I received it.

Write again soon, and then you shall have a few words immediately.

Translator's note: Yggdrasil was a great ash tree in ancient Norse mythology, with its roots binding heaven, earth, and the underworld together. On some Norwegian farms, a big ancient tree would be called Yggdrasil, and would be a landmark, a meeting place for sweethearts, a climb to sanctuary for children; and apparently there was such a tree on the hill behind Houkom.

The Hardanger Fiddle, sometimes called the Harding fiddle, differs from a violin in that it has eight

strings instead of four. Four of the strings go over the top of the bridge, as in a typical violin, but the other four go through tiny holes in the bottom of the bridge, and provide a drone accompaniment to the melody something like the drone in Scottish bagpipe music. Hardanger fiddles are usually very beautifully crafted with inlaid mother-of-pearl and different colored woods. If any reader would like a sample of Hardanger fiddle music, send me a blank cassette tape and I will record some from my record collection. D.R.

Aslak to Parents 9/5/1886

Audubon, Becker Co., 5<sup>th</sup> Septbr. 1886

Dear Parents:

Many thanks for the letter which I received yesterday Saturday. I and Hans have still been around here Audubon in harvest and stacking. We have now for several evening each our time met at the Railroad Station to guide Tarjer to Lie. Actually she is still in Dakota with Olaf and Thone and she had then written that she would in the end of last month come here to Audubon on her return; but she has still not come. Naturally Thone will hold on to her as long as she can. Now yesterday evening Hans went and he brought back both a Hvideseid letter and a Bratsberg-Fillemore letter, namely from Olaf Saltevej. He - namely Olaf Saltevej - has not yet had any earnings. It is certainly a very bad place Fillemore Co. - Anne has now newly given birth to a healthy and well-formed girl. She had an easy birth, he says, and is well - Yes it was a great joy for me to hear from home now. Especially it was happiness to hear that you are well at home; for the question of whether you at home are well has often run in my thoughts. You have certainly been busy in the mowing; but it is so good that one with good health can get through with it. Here in America it is very hard to work in the summer because of the hot and heavy air. In the summer it has been very hot so it is not rare to hear that folk die or become ill from the heat. Yes, here in America the mowing work is done in the different method than home. Each land must operate according to its conditions. The great America must naturally operate in a great way; although I for my part often feel a longing for the small Norwegian methods and ways; but "all things are forgotten with time" -

I notice now that I am beginning to feel happier here; but the thought of your painful indebted condition often makes me restless and anxious. It was therefore good to hear that the times, for Telemark's concerns now, although only a little, have changed for the better; — it was good that there was no farm sale in the spring. It would perhaps have gone well for you if Aslak Haugen's affairs had not been involved. Yes I have often walked alone and been angry and worried over Aslak Haugen's concerns. It seems to me as though he has worked to make you feel safer until he had tangled you in his web of debt to leave you in it so that he himself could wriggle out and be free of the whole thing. I wish I knew whether he doesn't have a good sum of money to travel with; or where and how he got the money for the tickets for himself and Signe. For my part I certainly have the thought that he wasn't so short of cash yet. He didn't always keep his word in his transactions, and in that case one also has reasons to suspect what I have written. Yes, it is reasonable that it would be advantageous for you if you could wait to sell; but Aslak's affairs probably make that impossible; so I'm not surprised Father that this is giving you grey hair. Have you heard from Aslak? What if he thinks of compensating you for the loss you suffer for him? I have recently had letters from Anders and Thone: they live in the vicinity of each other in Dak. I hope you have had a letter from Thone. I hope you have received the letter I wrote you a while since when I had the swollen hand; I was unlucky with my first workplace but then I was lucky there by reason of the swollen hand. Now threshing has begun and here there is plenty of work available for 1 Doll and 25 cents and perhaps a bit more; but for that will neither I or Hans go into threshing and we will probably go to work on the railroad at Hawley in Clay Co. There one can get work until New Year for 2 Doll pre day and not heavy work; one has to work from 7 o'clock till 12 and then from 1 o'clock till 6 o'clock so we have exactly 10 hours daily while one in threshing works both early and late; but so on the railroad one has to keep himself in food and get it for 4 Dol per week but it is not so bad as there is rarely here any opportunity to earn more than one's food in winter. I therefore plan to take what earnings I can for the winter and then if I have any time left over, I intend to spend it at English school; for it is very bad not to know English.

If one knows English one is ready to accept whatever is available. Here there can be various jobs that are

well paid and which preferably Scandinavians get, as they generally have a reputation of being reliable. However, I believe that Agriculturalists live the healthiest life and it should therefore not be out of the way to speculate preferably on taking land in Washington or Oregon where the climate is supposed to be very healthy and nature similar to Norwegian. A prairie farm seems to be barren and sad although it in many ways is preferable. Yes I should certainly like it if we could gather with you, parents, away in Washington and build a new Sundbygd where we could live free from worries about sustenance. It would certainly be somewhat strenuous at first but I certainly think it would succeed once we got used to the conditions. It would certainly be a long and troublesome journey for you who are old; ut one of us could come home to help you on the journey, which I foresee as necessary. You can not depend on strangers, as they, after all, probably think they have enough to do for themselves. — Yes as I said I'm thinking of going to English School however I don't intend to pay for any other schooling; but work myself to an independent position with the education I already have, so that in return for your solicitude I can be of help to you. Yes, if one is lucky, that is to say, not unlucky, here in Amr. one can certainly make progress, I already seem to understand; but it truly depends on working, so I understand now that it involves doing a great deal more in one day than what I considered a full day's work at home.

Yes, we must now each one strive to his own corner as well as he can for the present, with the hope of a happy reunion.

I have still not sold any of the fiddles. They stood the journey well; but I have had little time to use them. Around here people don't know much about music and of Norwegian country music they know nothing. If I want to enjoy my fiddle I prefer to be alone.

As far as growth and crops are concerned it looks like a good year. Wheat prices are also still climbing.

It will be fine if you write immediately. Until later you can still use the same address. Greet friends and relatives from me. Be yourselves most lovingly greeted from us.

Your devoted As. S. Haukom

Translator's note: This is the second letter in which Aslak has addressed his parents as "so old"! His father, Svennung, was born on April 3, 1829, so at the time of this letter he was 57 years old; but it is likely that his responsibilities and financial worries had made him seem much older. Aslak himself was 22. D.R.

Svennung to Aslak 10/12/1886

Hvideseid the 12<sup>th</sup> Octbr. 1886

Dear Son:

Your letter of 5<sup>th</sup> last month as also your earlier one, namely of 3<sup>rd</sup> July have I well received, and it truly gladdens us greatly to hear that you are all well and live well in your new home, and the same glad tidings I can also convey to you from the home. We are God be thanked still in uncomplaining good health, and live as usual well even if it is very busy, and many times appears very difficult to overcome our many debt obligations. But when the need is greatest help is nearest, says the Proverb, and often in my life I have experienced the truth of that. And so I hope still to find a source for the necessary expenses, even though such as so often before in my life seem to be completely closed to the natural ways of thinking. Yes we must not lose courage, but steadily hope for the best, so there will certainly be a solution, even if at present it seems unlikely.

Thursday nest week we were finished with potato digging, which turned out well. We got over 50 barrels of fresh and especially good potatoes which is a great amount from the seed. The corn also came safely into the barn, as we have had such perfectly good weather the whole autumn, that I can not remember such even, mild harvest weather, and not too dry either as we have now and then had rain, but briefly, so the water level for a long time has been too low for the steamships in Sundkilen. For an example: I can tell you that for the temperature during the day the barometer shoed 10 degrees of heat and so it has been for the whole autumn from the middle of September showing between 10, 12 and up to 14 or 15 degrees of heat, but about the middle of last month we had a few cold nights so that the potato leaves froze almost all over, and snowsqualls showed until the snow lay thick on the mountains in the east, but here it appeared only as hail showers. I can not tell you that once again I have my brave servant boy Tarjei Klevstul, he came here 14 days ago and will be here at first till Christmas. He is certainly expensive for me, I pay him 4 Kr. Per week, but all the same I am very happy to have him as I had great need for one, and he is a very kind and capable boy. Now he is also well and looks just as good as he did before. Guttorm was a wild fellow who was not the one to have, which he made more obvious the better he was known. On Sunday night I was at Heien fishing, but it was apparently too early in the autumn, nothing would bite, but today I shall go again to try once more. It is so wonderfully free and enjoyable to be in Heien, even in Autumn, when the weather is as beautiful as now, I for my part think I seem to get another life when I wander there in Heien. One is seemingly lifted up over the daily struggle which continually occupies the thoughts and subdues the mind, and so for a while to be escaped from the everyday makes one feel so light and free, and therewith returned to the days of youth, so that happy singing and dancing which for a long time have been forgotten come flowing back of themselves. Yes, it is truly refreshing to take such a tour to Hei.

Of the news that you request from here I have little to tell, however, I'll try to pluck together what I can remember. Your friend L. Storgaard will soon have a wedding with Aslaug Gadeholt. Margit Kirkebø has moved to Bakken which she has bought from Olaf Groven for 2,900 Kr and allowing the felling of 30 dozen fir lengths in the woods, which Olaf can, if he wants, let stand for 5 or 6

years. It is very well paid I think. Old Skriveren shall soon flit from here and he will now probably have the joy of paying considerable money to Nesboet for his stupidity during the settling of the estate, before he leaves here.

Olaf Gadeholt is now probably going to marry Anne Kaasa and take over the farm next spring.

Svennung to Aslak 10/12/1886

I have also to tell you some sorrowful news, namely that Hans Tykesen Louvodden from Vraadal while working with the timber clearing in Uddedalsfjell was killed last Saturday. Thus he should end his days under the work which has been his major employment, this eager woodsman.

We have recently had a letter from Anne S. Salteve in Flaabygd, in which she tells that her sister Gunnild who was married in the summer has already had a large and well formed boy, and is, considering the circumstances, fairly well. Inger Naes and Amiord also had a wedding in the summer. I don't know any other news from there.

It pleases me much to know from your letter that Anne has recovered from her childbed, we have had many worries about her as she seemed to look so weak on her departure. If you write to them so greet them from us and bid them to write to us, as we wish to much to hear how they and the children are getting along over there. You must also greet them from Anne Salteve, she longs so much for little Svennung, she says, and bids us also to greet all of you.

It pleases me also to hear of your decision, which in my opinion is very wise, to try to become independent, and not to throw away everything you earn on school fees, but the language is certainly a very necessary thing to learn completely. It has - as I hear you have already experienced - always been my opinion that a farmer who understands his business must have the best prospects for living a worry-free life over there, and so freedom, then, no official is so independent, and free as a farm owner, who owns his farm, and being your own master implies much. And it would certainly gladden me if also Anders would go over to your decision, and give up the school. Then when we old ones can also come over there, and we, just as you say, can build a new Sundbygd, it would be so wonderful. But it looks as if it would take a long time to achieve that. And since I, as I said before, have the hope for better times, I would unwillingly let go for the price as long as I by any method can keep up the installments and interest, but it truly seems very difficult to do. In autumn I had to sell two more animals, namely Dagros and our biggest calf, to raise money, and I am satisfied that what I got, considering the time, was a fairly good price. For Dagros I got 100 Kr and for the calf 60 Kr and that is not so bad since prices for animals were very poor in the autumn. Now we only have Adlin and Triros and the little calf.

How heavy it is, I think now, to be subjected to having to ask Olaf and Anders if they could send back to me some money. When Olaf was at home he received at his departure 50 Kr from me, as he was almost completely depleted of money. Anders also received on his departure an amount of cash from me, how much I don't remember, and also I paid his debt to Gunder Klevstul which was 22 Kr. If they could just send me this money back now it would be so welcome to me. You can, if convenient, either when you write to them or verbally, talk to them about it. I had never thought of mentioning it, but as circumstances are, I hope they will excuse me.

At the same time as I received your letter, I received one from Aslak Haugen, he is waiting for a letter from Hans, and thinks of traveling westwards as soon as he has cleared his debt in Visconsien. You must not believe that he left with money. The money he bought the tickets with for himself and Signe was almost all gifts from friends here. He writes that he had only a single dollar in his pocket when he came over to Bergvaet in Visconsien, and I believe that is true. Besides, he says that he will strive with all his strength to repay his debts in Norway. He finds himself well satisfied with America, and sees already much better chance to manage there than in Norway. Signe has longed much, but is better no. His address is "Taylord Jackson Co."

I hear that your violins have come safely through the long journey, it was very pleasing and good to hear,

because they cost not so little, but how does it happen that folks over there have so little sense for music? It would therefore be useless for Hans Fykerud to take a joyride over there to liven up the youngsters with Norwegian County Music. I talked with him on Dyreskuet, he rented the Hall at Bjørge and certainly earned much money. I must greet you so sincerely from him and bid you finally to send him a letter. In Autumn he will take a trip down here to Kvideseid.

From Olaf Sjonsaed I shall also greet you all, he has recently been here, and then he told that one of his sons, namely Olaf as well as I remember, was doing Railroad work in the same place as you and Hans have thought of traveling to. If you should meet him he bids that you will tell him that all is well at home.

I will ask you one thing, whether you believe that I who have such an unreliable and sick stomach will be able to tolerate the sea journey. I have myself great fright about it but perhaps there is no basis for it. I send you also today some no.s of Fedreheimen for a little amusement and to pass the time in free hours. So be now herewith altogether most lovingly greeted from us all at home and greet all relatives and friends whom you meet, from me, and you are most lovingly greeted from your always devoted father.

S.O. Houkom

I wait a letter for Christmas from one of you.

(Marginal notes:) If you write to Anders so beg him to send a letter home it will gladden us greatly.

Have the spinning wheels withstood the journey well?

Translator's notes:

When Svennung refers to the temperatures he uses the word Barometer, not Thermometer. He is using the Celsius scale. 10 degrees C = 50 degrees F and 15 degrees C = 59 degrees F, approximately.

Anne S. Salteve in Flaabygd is possibly a sister of Olaf Salteve, who married Svennung's eldest daughter, Anne, referred to in the next paragraph, and in previous letters.

Visconsien and Taylord are Svennung's spellings, not my mistakes. In Book I, Dorthe Bergseth refers to Aslak and Signe, and Signe's homesickness. According to her, Aslak and Signe finally did well, and had a beautiful place by 1891.

Hans Fykerud is one of the very famous Telemark fiddlers, who traveled from place to place to play for dances, weddings, and other joyful celebrations. It is his music that Aslak has been practicing, as Anders mentions in his letter of August 24<sup>th</sup>. D.R.

Tone to Anne 10/20/1886

Manvel Grand Forks Co. Dakota 20/10/1886

Dear Sister Anne:

Yes now I will write to you Anne, to see whether I can get an answer. I long so much for a letter from home. I wrote four letters to Norway as soon as I came here, and still I haven't received any letters back. I have certainly to my great joy gotten to hear about home through the letter to Tora which she sent me in a letter, so I can see that everything goes on in its old way. But there is so much that I would think it such fun to hear, have you had a servant girl? Have you been to the city this summer? Did Birgit Houkom travel over here to Am this summer? Yes when you write so must you write about everything you know, for the least thing is fun for me, who has none any longer since I left home. Yes I must now tell you who I live with now. As you well know, so I am with Olaf and keep house for him, I am well contented here, it was certainly a bit dull after Tora left, and especially when I was alone, for Olaf can be away three or four days at a time when he goes to Minisota and Gusrøver (Goose River) and Anders was away at work. Yes then it wasn't otherwise but that I longed, but now Anders is home all the time, today he came home with a little organ which he will practise singing with, for he will hold Sunday School and singing society in the church now, as he hasn't anything else to do you know, as he will not go to school. You wrote to Tora that they were so glad when they heard that Anders would come home, but you must no misunderstand me, so that you would be fooled, it wasn't in autumn, but it was when they are ready to travel, then he will come just as it was discussed before we left. Aslak says now that he will come here you know, so I think there will be plenty of fun here. Yes you can believe that if he is here I will have nothing to long for, yes, it won't be so long now I hope. I have been excellently well since I came here, just immediately after I arrived I was not very well for eight days, and it was probably the change of climate they say. I have one cow one pig and twelve hens to take care of (he has received the pig) all the hens he has received, yes he gets all kinds of things when he is out and travels he comes home with whole loads, butter and cheese and whey cheese and potatoes they have kept it up the whole summer. Here there is plenty of Norwegian food, I have eaten almost nothing except Norwegian food after I came here, I have even baked bread. I mustn't forget to tell you that we have two kittens also which play. I regret that I not managed to get Karen to make my wool dress, because here it is twice as expensive to have it done, and they are so much more independent, I haven't been able to do anything yet. You can safely do your own as far as pattern is concerned for they are alike. You have probably heard how sad it has been with Ragna's mother, who was gored to death by an ox. We don't know how long we can be here in the world, may God be merciful who can help to protect, only for Jesus' sake. We saw it first in the newspaper, but I slept very little that night, then I didn't forget mother's last word to me, when I left, that we must pray for each other. I wrote to Anne Saltevje in the summer but I have not had a reply, but I have heard that she has had a little girl, and that she was so sick at the birth that she almost died. Poor Anne, who has had to come here into a cabin, Olaf is very unhappy about her, for he knows so well how they are situated he says, drink and cursing are the order of the day there.

I must tell you how our house looks. It is just a simple rectangular room, it belongs to a farmer who is called Gudbron Stasta, (Gudbrand Stadstad) he lives even further away from us. He (Olaf) doesn't pay anything to be here, he is just here till he can build himself a house. Yes as I said it is just a simple rectangular room with a room above, Olaf and Anders are busy now enclosing it in, so that it will be warmer in winter, because that it is their bedroom, I have my bed down in the room. There are three windows, in a corner between the windows stands a bookshelf which reaches from the floor up to the roof, which is full just with Olaf's books, under the window stands a folding table, in a corner near the bed stands a cupboard, beyond the bed a washstand, in front of the bed stands a cookstove, a rocking chair and 6 other chairs and there are blue roller blinds and yellow gauze curtains. Four pictures are hung

up, the fourth Greek class, the theology class, with Olaf and three others on it, then a Swedish priest Hasselkrist, then Haukom, hung over the bed, the Organ stands between the bookshelf and the window. In the south window stand four flowerpots a lily an oleander a geranium and one with red leaves which I don't know the name of. Tora brought them with her from Minneapolis, I should have them to care for. Tora was here for six weeks, she helped us fix up the house as it did not look so fine when we came, you can believe. To end, must you, Father and Mother be so lovingly greeted from your

Tone.

(Marginal notes:) I can tell you that Olaf mowed and I and Tora raked in the summer, Tora had not raked for 7 years.

You must greet Karen Svenkesen that she shall soon have a letter from me. Greet Anne Postmyr, yes, all at Postmyr and Orli, yes all acquaintances, from me. The card is for Anne Postmyr's little girl.

Translator's note: In Aslak's letter to his parents 9/5/1886 he quotes Olaf Salteveje as saying that Anne had an easy birth, and is well. Now Tone reports that Anne was so sick she almost died. Who is right? The remarks in previous letters give an unfavorable impression of Olaf Salteveje, perhaps deserved, perhaps in-law dissatisfaction. This latest report may just be a rumor that has gathered melodrama on its way across the prairie. Who knows?

Aslak to Parents 11/21/1886

Onland P.O. Clay Co. Minn.  
The 21<sup>st</sup> November 1886

Dear Parents:

I received your letter of 12<sup>th</sup> Octbr the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month. I see therein that you are in uncomplaining health and that under the circumstances you are well although troubled by reason of the debt-ridden condition in which you stand. It gladdens me much to hear that you live and are well. I am now doing well; but notwithstanding this anxious feelings come over me when I start thinking about how you are situated at home. It is therefore such a relief to receive reports from home. I shall reply to this letter later when I have finished school and have more time. The purpose of this letter is, to remove the suspense concerning Anne Salteve's health, which possibly my letter to sister Anne at home may have caused you. I have recently received a letter from Olaf Salteve in which he says that Anne is fairly well again after her serious illness. He and the children are also well. They have also longed to hear from you at home, and I then wrote to them what I knew from home. He bids me also to find out where he shall move to in the spring, as there is so little to earn there where he is and as Anne wishes very much to come and be near us.

It makes me happy to ascertain that you have no unwillingness towards the journey to America. It is strange enough here at the beginning, but it passes with time; and when you too are over here we could all move together and with God's help we will then have enough strength to make ourselves comfortable. As I said I shall reply in more detail to the letter later. --- I am well, and according to the latest information all my brothers and sisters are in good health. Greet Tarjei from me; I am very glad that you have him once again as hired boy. Hones and brave servants certainly pay for themselves even if they can be expensive. However, there is a great difference between here and Norway. In Norway a hired boy is expensive when he must be paid 4 Kr a week. Now I have not worked for less than 1 Dollar a day and have this summer had up to 2.

Now you must all be very lovingly greeted from me!  
Your devoted

Aslak

You have probably received my letter from England in which I said that there was no gold in the ring which I had from Kristofer ? What did he say about it? It is now almost black. ---

Adr. A. S. Houkom C/o Rev. O. S. Houkom, Manvel, Grand Forks Co. Dakota

Olaf to Tarjer (Thora) 12/30/1886

Northwood the 30<sup>th</sup> Dec 1886

Dear Sister:

It is usual these days to greet each other with a wish for a merry Christmas, but as we are now closer to the new year I would rather forget what is past and seek after that which is ahead and therefore wish each other a good and blessed New Year.

I must thank you not only for your trouble but also for the expense of repairing the collar.

You could keep the carrying-strap, if it had been fit for your use, but it is too ugly, but you can do whatever you think about it.

Aslak came to us sometime before Christmas and I don't know how long he will be here. I have not had the pleasure of being home at Christmas. I came here to Goose River Christmas Eve and should have been home yesterday but no train came. Because of the bad weather I have not been able to hold more than one service during Christmas.

I send herewith 85 Dollars. It was actually 100 Dolls which remained last year, at New Year, but then you received 20 Dolls in the summer for Tone's and Aslak's trip so there was just 80 Dolls. The 5 Dolls are interest on the 100 Dolls for a year, since you will be satisfied with 5 per cent.

Many thanks for the loan! Greet acquaintances.

Now live well in society with Jesus, and be heartily greeted from your devoted brother  
Olaf S. Houkom

Aslak to Parents 2/2/1887  
Manvel, Grand Forks Co. Dak. 2/2/1887

Dear parents and sister,

Your letter, dear father, of 12/10 (Oct 12) last year have I well received and for which you are thanked so much. Here it is already 2/2/87 and I have still not sent any real letter home after getting it. I have certainly reasons for that, but it depends on whether they are valid. When I finished school last November, I went to Lie, where Hans was and still is. I was there a couple of weeks and thought then of writing home, when I came here and had a bit more to write about. Then I came here in the middle of December and a few days afterwards received a letter from Hans with the question, what time was best for us (namely Olaf) to go there east to Lie, for there should be a wedding at Christmas and they suggested the day after. Olaf had no opportunity to go there and we others couldn't afford to. That was our answer. Hans didn't write, who was having the wedding and we thought: perhaps both pairs were having the wedding the same day. Now I would not write home, before I knew who was getting married. Now I have just received a letter from Hans, he waited so long to answer, as he was very busy, and besides, thought there was no hurry, as we couldn't come. It was only Svend Edland and Martha Lie who had the wedding — As I said I came here in the middle of December and will perhaps be here the whole winter, if I don't get anything paying to do. I can however tell you, that we are all well and thriving. For my part, already I look much better than when I was at home. My work at present is to take care of Olaf's horse, and the cows, pigs, chickens, chop wood, and drive him occasionally. That is all I can do every day. Christmas here was about the same as other holy days. Olaf had to go to a congregation further west the first day of Christmas. Thone, Anders, and I were therefore alone at home on Christmas Eve, and washed and tidied up. Though it wasn't much of a job. I cut the Christmas wood in an hour. We mustn't forget that according to old Norwegian custom we made the grain sheaf for the birds. The thirteenth evening we had the Christmas tree festival in the church. Here is a new church which is still not quite finished. It is a spacious beautiful church with a tower and a bell in it, which isn't often seen over here. On Sundays when there is a service the sound of the bell rings out over the prairie just like Kviteseid Church bell "called an old and young." Anders has served as parish clerk for a while; now he is only the school teacher here. The pastor and the clerk were not forgotten with gifts on the Christmas tree. Olaf got, among other gifts, a living-room clock worth 7 Dollars. Anders got among other things 10 Doll in gold, mostly from a singing club which he has trained. They got gifts worth about 15 Doll each. Here money is not as scarce as in Norway, even if it is "hard times" here, too. I have not heard much talk about foreclosures, forced auctions, summons, and that sort of thing here. What a bad condition Norway is in, with all its Public Functionaries, one can first see after coming away from it all. All that kind of thing one sees nothing of here, everything seems to work out by itself, if one only works. It is remarkable what effect it has, when one sees the fruit of one's work.

Hans and I are thinking of taking up land soon in the spring. It depends on finding some that we like.

From May 1<sup>st</sup> I will have a school post in one of Olaf's congregations. School will be held for three months at 25 Doll per month plus board (20 days per month.) I shall be finished with the school at the best work time. You ask in your letter, Father, if I believe you would endure the sea journey, while you still have such a weak stomach. It would be strange if you couldn't endure it. That you will be sick there is no doubt; but as it is as much in the head as in the stomach, I am sure you can endure it, as you have a good head. A good help against sea-sickness is that one doesn't keep still, but walks around and keeps moving; In that way you are better off than mother, who has such bad legs. It is quite likely that the sea voyage can be a benefit to your health. The main thing for avoiding sea-sickness is to keep yourself in a sober condition. I saw examples of that. Strong healthy boys lay like corpses because they were drunk when they went on board. To keep yourself evenly fed is also a good thing; that I believe helped me a

great deal to avoid sea-sickness, together with eating a lot of sugar candy. I thought often of you parents on the trip, and it seems to me it would be an unpleasant journey for you, who are so heavy and slow; but it is only a few days. However, I saw other elderly and just as heavy people on the trip, and they could be quite happy, yes many times with more courage than a lot of the young ones. When, as we think, one of us, who has made the journey before, helps you on the way, I certainly believe the journey will have a happy course. From Olaf Ness we have recently had a letter; they are well, except that Anne is unwell now and then. He will move here in the northwest in the spring, as there is little fortune in Fillemore and Anne wished to come near us, which is reasonable. I've also had a letter from Olaf Haugen; he and the others are well and thrive. His father is parish clerk.

Your letter, Anne, I have also received. I see from it that all is not so well at home, since you all three are sickly. As you see I am well, I thrive and have good future prospects, but however, there is a restlessness over me, which prevents me being happy, and what causes it? Yes, it is because I know that you at home do not have a good life; thinking of yourselves sunk deep in debt, working with all your strength without knowing what the results will be, and in addition your health failing. However, I can still do nothing for you other than bid you to take it easy. I do not believe that God has given us life and limbs so that we shall destroy and make them sick with our efforts. He says much more that we should cast all our care on him; he will care for us. Is it possible God could have said it without meaning it? I believe, you will not take it as an offense that I remind you of that word which we continually forget in our striving. Be of good courage; when you come over here you can rest after your heavy work days. If only you could come soon.

Hans has met Thor Kleivstul; he will also look for land for himself in the spring. Olaf Haugen has in great haste met Johans Brauti. In the newspapers here is written about his shameful conduct. I have not thought it of Johans O. Haugen has also met Kittil Haukom. He had to give up some drops of sweat during the harvest, he said; however, he has made quite a lot of trips here, also. Tarjei's letter I have received. Thank him for me; I shall write to him later.

Olaf is not at home at present; he went to Devil's Lake, where he has land. Olaf Ness is thinking of buying if from him soon, it is 80 acres --

Greet friends and relatives, and you are most lovingly greeted from us. Your devoted  
Aslak Houkom  
(Marginal Notes:) Thone will soon write to Anne.

For "Fedreheimene" I say so many thanks; it was a great joy to me to read them.

This morning it was 31 Norwegian degrees of cold here (Rheameur).

Translator's note: Olaf Ness is Olaf Salteveje, Aslak's brother-in-law. Thor Kleivstul is brother to Tarjei, the "hired boy" at Houkom. Thor is also sweetheart of Thone, Aslak's sister.

The identity of Kittil Houkom is uncertain; but there were three separate farms in Kviteseid with the Haukom (Houkom) name, north, south, and lower. Kittil may be the son of one of these farmers, a neighbor, but not necessarily a relative. Svennung Olsen Houkom's farm was South Houkom, (Suistogu). My information is from a letter written by Aslak to his nephew John in 1934. D.R.

Svennung to Aslak

2/14/1887

Hvideseid the 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 1887

Dear Son:

In your letter dated 21/11 last year you promised as soon as possible to send me a complete answer to my last letter to you, and as such has still not arrived I can no longer hold back my longing and wondering about it, and I have therefore had recently the fear that your letter some way other is lost on the way. This is therefore the reason that I now send you these lines, and it is my wish and hope that they may find you and your brother and sisters as well as other relatives in the best prosperity. We are here at home all well and under the circumstances live well, but very busy because of my great debts and obligations. In autumn it seemed quite lively here for a while when load prices began to climb somewhat and sales went fast ahead, but that happiness was not lasting, for now it is already just as bad as it has been for a long time. Yes, loads are at present almost unsaleable because of the threatened war conditions between France and Germany which set the whole of Europe in motion, and all powers arm themselves far over their means as no one is sure where it will end if it breaks loose between the great powers, as all signs point strongly towards. In Autumn I selected and felled the spruce loads I could find in Klevstul Ridge (about 30 dozen) which I got sold fairly well to Selbulosen, whereby I got a deposit in advance to cover the overdue interest and instalments, but by Christmas time I was again embarrassed. I decided then to fell the fir loads I could find on the ridge in the hope of getting it sold for an acceptable price and thereby come in possession of money which I so desperately needed. But this plan went all wrong for the reason aforementioned. The woods, as I said, I have chopped down, but money is just as far away, so I must complain aloud of my depressed state, which as you know is made much worse by brother Aslak's demands, whereby all credit has completely vanished for me. Mine and Olaf Gjersund's case with the Savings Bank concerning the endorsement for Kittil Haukom have also lost in the High Court whereby we got the responsibility for the aforesaid ragged Kittil of about Kr 600 together, overdue in 14 days. As I have been unable to find money although as you see I have done everything possible in that direction, so it is now demanded by the Sheriff for the Hypothecate Bank that all my property be auctioned, and often when I have been pressed by difficulties I have thought that there was no other solution except to let it go, however sorely heavy it would be for me. I have worked hard for a private sale, but up to now it has not succeeded, I am so tired and weary of all this continual demand, and wish so much I could get away from it all, but also that I could dispose of my property to the best advantage, which is not so easy to do at this time. Under the circumstances I take the liberty — after advice from several — to ask if you in association could help me with an amount of money according as your position allows it, and all of your contributions shall in such respect be exactly noted in the hope that all in time shall receive his outlay back with interest. But something must be done immediately as you see the circumstances permit no delay.

Just before Christmas and during Christmas we got a lot of snow so the snow plow had to drive on the roads almost every day. But 3 weeks ago thaw weather began so strongly that nearly all the snow has gone in 8 days time. Here now is almost bare earth on the fields and a little slush on the roads so at present the surface is very bad. The steamship Bratsberg still goes twice weekly, but there is not much travel now between Hvideseid and Flaabygd. It is not as it was in the old days, for now we seldom hear anything from there, even Svennung Saltevej has not been here since you left. From Halvor Dalen I send greetings, he was recently up here to see his daughter Andrea who has been staying with us since Christmas. She is a very clever little girl.

I see from your letter that Olaf (Ness) and Anne have waited anxiously for a letter from me, which I can not understand, since Olaf has not sent me a single line since their arrival in America and their address is therefore unknown to me. Write to them and tell them definitely to send me a letter as soon as possible, we long to hear from them and the children, and as soon as I have received their letter I shall write back to them you can tell them. It was certainly very good for them that they could so soon come to move westward to you, for after what I have heard there is no good situation there where they are. Do whatever you can, especially for Anne's and the children's sake, for their hasty moving.

From Brother Aslak I have just received a very good letter. He finds himself still very well satisfied in Wisconsin as the air is very healthy and good there and bad storms and thunder are very rare, yes, he says older folk can not remember any unusually hard weather there in his locality. Property there is not very high-priced. Thus he describes a very beautiful 40 acre farm and good buildings which is for sale for 500 dollars, as well as several larger properties for comparatively low prices. He says the land there resembles Norwegian land with many hills and woods, lakes large and small, and fairly good fresh water everywhere. He says it is uncertain whether he will move westward and in any case it would preferably be Washington Territory from what he has heard and experienced since he went over.

Olaf S. Opsund has now sold his farm to Mr. Tøgd Walloe for Kr. 16,000 and has kept the whole of his woods. If only one could find oneself so well paid. That property does not surpass mine in breeding and crops of grain and potatoes, also now complete woods thereto. Upper Midsund is sold to a veterinarian for Kr 13,500, but which still remains in the transaction to sell it again to O. Svennungsen. If only my time can come to get mine sold for an acceptable price. I shall greet you heartily from L. Storgaard and Aslaug, he would like a letter from you. Also from the Gadeholt folk I send greetings. Old Aslak said that you had promised him a letter He has now given up, Olaf shall have Gadeholt for Kr 14,500, and Saave Kirkebø for Kr 7,000. Gunder Bronhem is very unhappy.

Herewith a loving greeting to you all from us, who dearly wish soon to receive happy information from you dear children.

S. O. Houkom

Anders to Aslak 3/22/1887

Hillsboro Traill Co. Dak. 3/22/1887

Dear Brother:

I came to Hillsboro "all right" met Pastor Lønne and a farmer from Goose River in Grand Forks, so I had good company to Hills. where we stayed with the above-named Pastor. Next day was spent with All. ---

Friday I began school in the new splendid schoolhouse here. 31 children came since are even more enrolled and perhaps more will come still so I will have enough to do here also.

We have planned a singing meeting for the next Sunday. The bell will still be hanging up afterwards yes let it hang I have managed to borrow a large bell from a farmer here.

As you don't know anyone here or the place I have little to write about.

Hearty greetings to you all from your brother.

Anders Houkom.

You probably have plenty of time to write now Aslak.

Ravel!!

Translator's note: "all right" in the above letter was written in English. Both brothers were apparently working on the language and used occasional words they had learned.

The reference to the bell still hanging up I take to be a joke between them. The singing classes which Anders held seem to have been very popular, and perhaps Aslak has teased him about singing the bell off the wall.

In his letters to Aslak Anders frequently neglects punctuation and uses words and phrases from the Telemark dialect, but his other writings show that he can use good grammar and conventional style. This is perhaps an indication of the close brotherly affection between the two.

I do not know what he means by the work "Ravel" at the end, with the two exclamation marks. It may be a childhood variation of "Farvel" (farewell), which has become a family word. Nowadays my young correspondents in Norway often end their letters with "Hadet" and it was some time before I learned that it is an abbreviation for "Ha det bra" or "Have it good", the equivalent of "all the best". Perhaps Ravel is something like that.

D.R.

Aslak to Father 4/15/1887

Manvel, Grand Forks Co. Dak.

15<sup>th</sup> April 1887

Dear Father!

Your welcome letter of 14<sup>th</sup> febr and 5<sup>th</sup> last month I have received safely and I am very grateful for the same. You have certainly waited a while for an answer and I must then again ask your forgiveness. As soon as I had received your letter I sent it to Anders; he is actually in Hillsboro in Traill Co. and keeps a school. He answers me that he is willing to undertake the journey home to help you. But there is a bothersome "but" alongside and it demands that we take notice of it. He is, as he says, bound both by work and debt. He will be finished with his school in the first half of June month. Would it be soon enough for him to leave, when he is finished with the school? It will be a great loss for him to go away in mowing time, as this signifies much here; but there nothing can be done about it under the circumstances. We must all help together as much as possible, so there will be a means towards the journey and the fare. Yes I was both glad and sorry when I read your letter; sorry about the dilemma you were in; but also glad of the prospect of getting out of the dilemma and the meeting here, so that we avoid living so far apart from each other. It will be sad enough for you to part with your home; but I hope that will pass in a time and then I believe that you certainly will not wish yourselves back in the home's busy and worrisome life. When I consider how things are in Sundbygden I can not believe that there can be any pleasure in living there either; everything is now so different from the way it was just a few years ago. It will soon be, so to say, "a tramp from every town" constituting the population of Sundbygd. And it is then a terribly unhealthy life which is lived among both great and small and which we certainly for the most part can thank the tramp population for. All this means that there is not the same harmony among the farmers now, as I have the feeling that there must have been before; therefore we must try what we can do here, to correct that which at home would need more than strength.

We had a letter from Olaf Ness a good while since in which he bid us rent him a house here in the west, as he must arrange to move here. Brother Olaf then wrote to him, that he must come; for here there are many houses to rent. We have still not received an answer; but he will probably come soon in the spring I think. After I received your letter I wrote to him as you asked me. His declaration that he will go back to Flaabygd I can't believe he could be so stupid as to really mean; although it is not incomprehensible, as he has been down there without pay, as anyone would be weary about. Thone has had a letter from Anne; she has certainly yearned much through the winter also. It is very gratifying that they will come out here to the west as then it will certainly be better both for Olaf and Anne, as he can then get work and she will have more Company with her own people. Anne's health is fairly good; but she doesn't believe she will ever be completely well again after the serious illness she had in the autumn. --- I have recently had a letter from brother Hans; they are well also in that region. He struggles and scrabbles with his debt a well as he can; he has now bought himself a pair of horses and will now see how it will go with them; we must hope for the best. I had a letter some time ago from Olaf Haugen; they are doing well. Thora lives well and is healthy according to her last letter.

In 14 days time I shall go further west and begin at the previously contracted school. ---

Greet Leiv and Aslaug Storgard very diligently from me; also Aslak Gadeholdt. I have still not forgotten that I promised them a letter I must try to do it now before I begin with the school. I can now let you know that we are well except that for several days I have had a very bad cold; but I think it is getting better now. Yes, it has been an exceptionally hard and snowy winter here in Dakota people may. ---

How are all your people? How is Olaf Staaland? Both his sons have land now I have heard.

Greet friends and relatives most diligently. You are all at home most lovingly greeted from us. Your always devoted.

Aslak Houkom

Write soon about how we best can arrange the trip home. Much depends on the sale of the farm. If you haven't sold the farm there is perhaps a little to think about whether it would be better to postpone the journey because of the money.

(Marginal note) Thone has received Anne's letter; she had thought to send a reply now but she didn't have time, but she will do it immediately later.

Translator's note: Aslak was obviously in a hurry at the end - he doesn't usually forget periods and use such contradictions as "strax siden" - immediately later.

On his second page there is a large blot - possibly a teardrop ?? - where he writes about the sadness of his father leaving the old home.

In previous letters he has referred to "building a new Sundbygd" in America, when the family is all together again. Sundbygd is the name of the district in Telemark where the villages of Kviteseid, Kyrkjebø, and Brunkeberg are located, but Kviteseid is the largest of the villages, and therefore a much larger area is also known as Kviteseid District. Like many other Norwegian uses of names, this can be confusing. I tried to make it clear on the map in Book I, "They Came From Kviteseid". Referring to the map might help. D.R.

Anders to Aslak 4/16/1887 5/12/1887 5/31/1887  
Hillsboro 16/4/1887

Dear Brother!

The people here have now decided that I can hold school through April and so be free, so I can have opportunity to leave early in May. You must therefore not change your previous decision concerning school in Hol / ?/.

Would you like to buy the organ? I think I can sell it here, but if you would like to buy it, I can take it with me back north again. Write soon, so I can know what you have all decided to do.

All well! I am longing to get away, so father and mother can come out of all the muddle at home. Are Olaf and Anne S. coming west soon? Friendly greetings to you all, from  
your br. Anders

Augb Sem 12 May 1887

Dear Brother!

I traveled Friday from Manwel, stopped overnight in Hillsboro and came here Sunday evening. Prof. Reimstad was not home and met him first Tuesday morning. He could not be ready to travel before the end of the week. He leaves tomorrow. The ship we shall go with leaves from New York Thursday of next week. Reimstad will stay over 3 or 4 days in New York; but as it will be very expensive for me to keep myself so long there, I have decided to stay here till Sunday evening. I have bought the writing books, 25 for 1.75 singly 10 ct. - but the book in question with the writing copy I could not obtain although I have searched for it in several bookstores. I shall write to Knut Nygaard and get him to send you the one he has. The Theologians are busy with their examination preachings and therefore (I) have a way to pass the time in going to listen to them. Thora and I lie out in the parks and talk in the evenings. It is certainly warm for holding school now. I hope your school is successful.

Hearty greetings your bro. Andres.

(The names Aagaat and Lewis are written in the margin.)

(This next letter is written on notepaper with a picture of Augsburg Seminary, and names of Officials printed. The address is crossed out, and Glasgow written in. D.R.)

Glasgow 31 May 1887

Dear Brother!

We arrived here today at 7 o'clock. We have had a fairly good trip. The weather was against us the whole way, and sometimes fairly cold; but as a set off I escaped with only 10 minutes sea sickness and could eat at every mealtime. We have to wait here till Friday, for then will go the first boat to Kristiania. I have written to O. and T. I shall write as soon as I get home.

Brotherly greetings from Anders.

Anders to Brother 6/16/1887  
Houkom, 16 June 1887

Dear Brother!

I hope you have received the letter I sent from Glasgow likewise that I sent Olaf from here so that you have some knowledge of how my journey went. The first I greeted on Kirkebo dock was "Luther Almshouse" from Kvideseid. He looked very strange. Such a man can cook and knows how to pour spirits into himself. I remembered that much when I looked into his eyes. He drinks, poor fellow. Father stood to one side, alone and almost bashful. He was much slimmer, his beard was grey-sprinkled and it was easy to see he has suffered. I felt so sorry for him. The good thing about Father is that ..... (Translator's note - I think there is a page missing here. D.R.) .....

satisfied. The man from Sil was pleased, but the only thing was that the woods were too small and too much felled. There was certainly no deal this time, but I have good hopes that they will be agreed. He has cleared the Bank, so there will be no forced auction. He has now decided to have an auction on the 14 July and thinks they will be ready to travel then. I therefore wish that you could obtain the money we talked about. Couldn't you and Olaf send enough money for a ticket? Thora said it was best if you sent to us the money that she should have had from you, when you sent yours. Or that you send as much as you can spare. Probably you won't need anything for the school now, but can't you get Olaf to talk to Eli about lending to you until you are through with the school? Or I expect certainly that you will find a way somehow, but by all means do it soon as we are dependent on it coming soon.

Father and Mother seem to be quite satisfied about emigrating. Father has had his eyes opened and knows it is impossible to succeed here at home and seems to be weary of all the muddle and at the same time angry at all these blood-suckers who have taken up residence in Sundbygd recently. Mother thinks only of how good it will be to come over and see all of us again and be at peace. Anne has completely "fallen away" as Mother says, because she had to stay here at home. Yesterday I rode north to the dock with Olaf Staalane. But "what a terrible world" so ponderously we talked. Leif was now huge and coarse, he answered. He is worth 800 daler now.

Tomorrow the new church in Vraadal will be consecrated. I and Anne shall drive with the mouse westward. Old Maren Mathiesen is dead. The young Maren now runs the house for the old man. Bergit J. is here working, and Helge Omnes sits in the bedroom weaving. Leiv Orlid herds Fairo and Adlin. Tarjei Klevstul left for A. in spring, he has probably arrived by now. Adleida Blom has waited a long time for me to come home. Now she thinks it is much too long to wait before we leave. Aslak Haugen wants us to come there where he is and stay for a month. I don't know if it will be possible. Write soon.

You are affectionately greeted from all at home. With many loving greetings from your devoted.

Anders Houkom

Anders to Aslak 3/22/1887

Hillsboro Traill Co. Dak. 3/22/1887

Dear Brother:

I came to Hillsboro "all right" met Pastor Lønne and a farmer from Goose River in Grand Forks, so I had good company to Hills. where we stayed with the above-named Pastor. Next day was spent with All. ---

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D.R.

Aslak to Father 4/15/1887

Manvel, Grand Forks Co. Dak.

15<sup>th</sup> April 1887

Dear Father!

Your welcome letter of 14<sup>th</sup> febr and 5<sup>th</sup> last month I have received safely and I am very grateful for the same. You have certainly waited a while for an answer and I must then again ask your forgiveness. As soon as I had received your letter I sent it to Anders; he is actually in Hillsboro in Traill Co. and keeps a school. He answers me that he is willing to undertake the journey home to help you. But there is a bothersome "but" alongside and it demands that we take notice of it. He is, as he says, bound both by work and debt. He will be finished with his school in the first half of June month. Would it be soon enough for him to leave, when he is finished with the school? It will be a great loss for him to go away in mowing time, as this signifies much here; but there nothing can be done about it under the circumstances. We must all help together as much as possible, so there will be a means towards the journey and the fare. Yes I was both glad and sorry when I read your letter; sorry about the dilemma you were in; but also glad of the prospect of getting out of the dilemma and the meeting here, so that we avoid living so far apart from each other. It will be sad enough for you to part with your home; but I hope that will pass in a time and then I believe that you certainly will not wish yourselves back in the home's busy and worrisome life. When I consider how things are in Sundbygden I can not believe that there can be any pleasure in living there either; everything is now so different from the way it was just a few years ago. It will soon be, so to say, "a tramp from every town" constituting the population of Sundbygd. And it is then a terribly unhealthy life which is lived among both great and small and which we certainly for the most part can thank the tramp population for. All this means that there is not the same harmony among the farmers now, as I have the feeling that there must have been before; therefore we must try what we can do here, to correct that which at home would need more than strength.

We had a letter from Olaf Ness a good while since in which he bid us rent him a house here in the west, as he must arrange to move here. Brother Olaf then wrote to him, that he must come; for here there are many houses to rent. We have still not received an answer; but he will probably come soon in the spring I think. After I received your letter I wrote to him as you asked me. His declaration that he will go back to Flaabygd I can't believe he could be so stupid as to really mean; although it is not incomprehensible, as he has been down there without pay, as anyone would be weary about. Thone has had a letter from Anne; she has certainly yearned much through the winter also. It is very gratifying that they will come out here to the west as then it will certainly be better both for Olaf and Anne, as he can then get work and she will have more Company with her own people. Anne's health is fairly good; but she doesn't believe she will ever be completely well again after the serious illness she had in the autumn. --- I have recently had a letter from brother Hans; they are well also in that region. He struggles and scrabbles with his debt a well as he can; he has now bought himself a pair of horses and will now see how it will go with them; we must hope for the best. I had a letter some time ago from Olaf Haugen; they are doing well. Thora lives well and is healthy according to her last letter.

In 14 days time I shall go further west and begin at the previously contracted school. ---

Greet Leiv and Aslaug Storgard very diligently from me; also Aslak Gadeholdt. I have still not forgotten that I promised them a letter I must try to do it now before I begin with the school. I can now let you know that we are well except that for several days I have had a very bad cold; but I think it is getting better now. Yes, it has been an exceptionally hard and snowy winter here in Dakota people may. ---

How are all your people? How is Olaf Staaland? Both his sons have land now I have heard.

Greet friends and relatives most diligently. You are all at home most lovingly greeted from us. Your always devoted.

Aslak Houkom

Write soon about how we best can arrange the trip home. Much depends on the sale of the farm. If you haven't sold the farm there is perhaps a little to think about whether it would be better to postpone the journey because of the money.

(Marginal note) Thone has received Anne's letter; she had thought to send a reply now but she didn't have time, but she will do it immediately later.

Translator's note: Aslak was obviously in a hurry at the end - he doesn't usually forget periods and use such contradictions as "strax siden" - immediately later.

On his second page there is a large blot - possibly a teardrop ?? - where he writes about the sadness of his father leaving the old home.

In previous letters he has referred to "building a new Sundbygd" in America, when the family is all together again. Sundbygd is the name of the district in Telemark where the villages of Kviteseid, Kyrkjebø, and Brunkeberg are located, but Kviteseid is the largest of the villages, and therefore a much larger area is also known as Kviteseid District. Like many other Norwegian uses of names, this can be confusing. I tried to make it clear on the map in Book I, "They Came From Kviteseid". Referring to the map might help. D.R.

Anders to Aslak 4/16/1887 5/12/1887 5/31/1887  
Hillsboro 16/4/1887

Dear Brother!

The people here have now decided that I can hold school through April and so be free, so I can have opportunity to leave early in May. You must therefore not change your previous decision concerning school in Hol / ?/.

Would you like to buy the organ? I think I can sell it here, but if you would like to buy it, I can take it with me back north again. Write soon, so I can know what you have all decided to do.

All well! I am longing to get away, so father and mother can come out of all the muddle at home. Are Olaf and Anne S. coming west soon? Friendly greetings to you all, from  
your br. Anders

Augb Sem 12 May 1887

Dear Brother!

I traveled Friday from Manwel, stopped overnight in Hillsboro and came here Sunday evening. Prof. Reimstad was not home and met him first Tuesday morning. He could not be ready to travel before the end of the week. He leaves tomorrow. The ship we shall go with leaves from New York Thursday of next week. Reimstad will stay over 3 or 4 days in New York; but as it will be very expensive for me to keep myself so long there, I have decided to stay here till Sunday evening. I have bought the writing books, 25 for 1.75 singly 10 ct. - but the book in question with the writing copy I could not obtain although I have searched for it in several bookstores. I shall write to Knut Nygaard and get him to send you the one he has. The Theologians are busy with their examination preachings and therefore (I) have a way to pass the time in going to listen to them. Thora and I lie out in the parks and talk in the evenings. It is certainly warm for holding school now. I hope your school is successful.

Hearty greetings your bro. Andres.

(The names Aagaat and Lewis are written in the margin.)

(This next letter is written on notepaper with a picture of Augsburg Seminary, and names of Officials printed. The address is crossed out, and Glasgow written in. D.R.)

Glasgow 31 May 1887

Dear Brother!

We arrived here today at 7 o'clock. We have had a fairly good trip. The weather was against us the whole way, and sometimes fairly cold; but as a set off I escaped with only 10 minutes sea sickness and could eat at every mealtime. We have to wait here till Friday, for then will go the first boat to Kristiania. I have written to O. and T. I shall write as soon as I get home.

Brotherly greetings from Anders.

Anders to Brother 6/16/1887  
Houkom, 16 June 1887

Dear Brother!

I hope you have received the letter I sent from Glasgow likewise that I sent Olaf from here so that you have some knowledge of how my journey went. The first I greeted on Kirkebo dock was "Luther Almshouse" from Kvideseid. He looked very strange. Such a man can cook and knows how to pour spirits into himself. I remembered that much when I looked into his eyes. He drinks, poor fellow. Father stood to one side, alone and almost bashful. He was much slimmer, his beard was grey-sprinkled and it was easy to see he has suffered. I felt so sorry for him. The good thing about Father is that ..... (Translator's note - I think there is a page missing here. D.R.) .....

satisfied. The man from Sil was pleased, but the only thing was that the woods were too small and too much felled. There was certainly no deal this time, but I have good hopes that they will be agreed. He has cleared the Bank, so there will be no forced auction. He has now decided to have an auction on the 14 July and thinks they will be ready to travel then. I therefore wish that you could obtain the money we talked about. Couldn't you and Olaf send enough money for a ticket? Thora said it was best if you sent to us the money that she should have had from you, when you sent yours. Or that you send as much as you can spare. Probably you won't need anything for the school now, but can't you get Olaf to talk to Eli about lending to you until you are through with the school? Or I expect certainly that you will find a way somehow, but by all means do it soon as we are dependent on it coming soon.

Father and Mother seem to be quite satisfied about emigrating. Father has had his eyes opened and knows it is impossible to succeed here at home and seems to be weary of all the muddle and at the same time angry at all these blood-suckers who have taken up residence in Sundbygd recently. Mother thinks only of how good it will be to come over and see all of us again and be at peace. Anne has completely "fallen away" as Mother says, because she had to stay here at home. Yesterday I rode north to the dock with Olaf Staalane. But "what a terrible world" so ponderously we talked. Leif was now huge and coarse, he answered. He is worth 800 daler now.

Tomorrow the new church in Vraadal will be consecrated. I and Anne shall drive with the mouse westward. Old Maren Mathiesen is dead. The young Maren now runs the house for the old man. Bergit J. is here working, and Helge Omnes sits in the bedroom weaving. Leiv Orlid herds Fairo and Adlin. Tarjei Klevstul left for A. in spring, he has probably arrived by now. Adleida Blom has waited a long time for me to come home. Now she thinks it is much too long to wait before we leave. Aslak Haugen wants us to come there where he is and stay for a month. I don't know if it will be possible. Write soon.

You are affectionately greeted from all at home. With many loving greetings from your devoted.

Anders Houkom

Svennung to Son 8/7/1888

Mekinock the 7<sup>th</sup> Aug 1888

Dear Son:

Your welcome letter of 30<sup>th</sup> last month I received on Saturday evening and Sunday I was southward on the prairie not far from Emerado and met Hans Skodbakken who went with me to a Jenko (Hankee - D.R.) who would hire folk, but since it was Sunday he would not engage in any bargaining about hire payment, but he would give as much as anyone around here. The man is commonly reported to be a kind reliable and orderly man. He is the son of an English Priest and has a good education. He will thus in the winter have a private English School in his own house for a number of older children around the neighborhood. I saw the man and got a good impression of him so I believe it must be a fortunate place and in every consideration after your wish as the house is beautiful, and I heard piano playing inside, so it is something grand for you. The place lies 2 eg. miles from where Hans Skodbakken lives and about 6 miles from here so you can easily visit us for every divine service here, and thus your mother could take over the patching of your clothes besides that it would be especially happy and joyful to be together so often. I have met to discuss with you, and therefore would dearly wish that you come here again as soon as possible, as the man would like to make a decision soon.

We strive every day and work with our house so we are very busy and time therefore does not allow me today to write more, but must break off with a very loving greeting from us who God be thanked are at present fairly well. Your mother has however been sickly now and then, certainly mostly for the reason that she has to walk far too much as for a long time we have had no other hired girl except little Inger, and therefore twice daily I must fetch the milk from Blattstad where our cows are in the pasture with Halvor's animals.

If you are coming here as I hope so write immediately and tell me which day you are coming to Emerado so I shall try and get a team and meet you there at the train's arrival.

Your always devoted father  
S.O. Houkom  
In great and obvious haste!

Translator's note: By 2 Eg. Miles Svennung means 2 English (or American) miles, as contrasted with the Norwegian mile, which is 10 kilometers, or about 6.2 of the miles we know.

Johans Thorsen Klevstul to Aslak 9/14/1888

### Unforgettable Friend Aslak

So many thanks and more thanks shall you have Aslak, for your letter, and for your true friendship with me. It is so strange here in the world, just as I take the pen the hand could tremble, yes there have I lost a friend in a thousand, but so it is not with me. It first gladdened me that you are well and that your parents and family are in good health, but then some news which can not gladden, namely Tone's death. Yes that can really pain much Aslak. I seem still to see her friendly smile and facial expression towards me. As I can imagine yours and Thor's position, for you are certainly acquainted with their long engagement, namely 7 years. For I have carried many letters between them, I, but she certainly got herself a better bridegroom than Thor. For God was with her. Yes we know the little song:

When for Blessed Rest we say Farewell  
To the World and all its Fears  
When Death from my body shall part my soul  
And friends stand by in tears  
When pulled back from all towards Jesus I go  
And the Kingdom of Glory I see  
Will someone stand there on the heavenly bridge  
To await and welcome me?

Chorus: Await and Welcome, Await and Welcome, Await and Welcome Me.

The Beloved Friend whom Jesus called  
We long to see again  
We think of her in lonely hours  
While she sings Heaven's refrain  
Yes Jesus loves them and takes them home  
From tears and struggle free  
But joy awaits at the Heavenly Bridge  
Awaits and welcomes me!

Chorus: Await and Welcome, Await and Welcome, Await and Welcome Me.

Yes, you probably think this is strange, but it was just as if someone said, "Let it out, Johans". Yes so long have I wanted to send what I know Aslak. It is shameful to say it, but so long a summer I cannot remember. I have waited so much for letters from the boys. Yes, it even went so far, that I expected Tor home every boat day with death news of Tarjei. Wetle had a letter from Thor that Tarjei had been under the Doctor's hand for the whole summer, but then I had a letter from Tarjei the 25<sup>th</sup> August and there he said he was well again. And so I have this year been alone since summer night. Turi is in service at Hogen with the Bailiff, and Wetle and Anne are at Holtan, he goes for daily work with the clerk, and in this way so can you not wonder about me.

Yes you certainly expect some news now Aslak. The first is that Gunnar Klevstul will be married with the widow Ingebjør Lia the wife of Torjus. Yes now shall you see that he takes care of his house. 3 new windows new floor and new ceiling, and new Eiderdowns, and an attic up above, and all to be finished by the harvest, and then Ingebjør shall come. Gunnar is the

owner of all, he has bought out Gulmund. Yes Gulmund is sick in the back every since Feb he has not done a hand's job all this summer, but sought Doctor Boberg he says it is gout, but I believe Tuberculosis. Yes Tov Masen is sick he is wasting away, and it got worse with him since midsummer, he had to go to the doctor, but he couldn't find anything about it, he had to go to Kristiania, and have an operation, and so the commissioners for the poor sent him there, and he was there for a month and was operated on, now he is home at Masen it will surely be his death. Olaf Aasen is married to Sjaage Rannei who served at Hogen. Torbjør married with Olaf Heia. Sanvik will be married to Sussane Midsun. Anne Tveit had the Banns read with son of O. Dalastul. Bjørn Gadeholt with daughter of Svennung Gronen. Enough of this now to Hokum. Yes now it is strange there. They have torn down the millhouse, and set up Saw Slipperworks and Henhouse in God knows all what shall happen there. Yes it is not anything but beggars and tramps and children all over the land, and now they are cutting down — you can believe — birch aspen ash and everything which can be found. Up in from the East and the whole Vraagdøl is destroyed they have changed the road. Part shall go close in the town on the north side right up and down they say. It certainly won't be there for long. Yes, you probably don't know that Østen has got himself Grande-Nes got a site on the upper side of the road. The cabin has come from Kirkebakken, but now Lompebakken. They took apart the whole thing, you know. Then they set up the cabin and he has an attic, too.

Yes I should certainly tell you that here has been a Revival in Sundbygd this summer. Jon Hokum and his wife were enlightened. At the same time were Østen and Anne Ørli, Kari Kosi, 2 girls at Opsund, they are from Vinje, Gonil Strømstad, Tarjer daughter of Eivind Shoemaker. Tennes the boy of Holst Broen of Holvor Aalø. Yes there is a meeting 1-2 every Sunday and prayer meeting every Thursday evening at Midsun. Sanvik - Aane - Knut - Mikkel - Ellef Bjørkset lives between Kosabak and Byaenkbug he came there in the spring and Kaplan Olsen and he is at Midsund where Grimgaard was - he is with Knut - now a doctor will come here from Baergen and he will have a house from Svenkesen. It will be an old Inn. Yes so I must tell you that the temperance society has grown much since you left. Now we have 100 members. You perhaps don't know that I am one of them. I have not tasted fermented ale nor Brandy for one year and neither shall I taste it. The last dram I drank was at the Auction your father had last year, and on the 4 September we shall have a party at Kumyen and there Asbjørn Øran shall speak in our cause. Yes now the time is coming to elect Electors how we shall fight about that. Now we no longer have Aslak Hogen to fight about — as you know any tramp is not to fight over we can get him inside out first and get to see all his insides. Yes that's what I think Aslak. Yes you talk about Aslak Hogen Aslak, and now I must beg you if you will be so good as to greet him very much from me and bid him that I might receive a letter from him. For Old Friendship's Sake. For he has still not been forgotten by me. Say it please Aslak.

Yes now it is all past with the Happy Boy for I have not had a day's fun since Tarjei left, for you know that it is strange when we become so lonesome and old and have no one to hold to, but I must certainly not complain. I'm probably not worth anything better. If you get a letter from them so greet them lovingly from me and tell them that they are in my thoughts both early and late.

You perhaps don't know that Mother Kjøonstul is dead, she died the 25<sup>th</sup> November last year - Tarjei Kjøonstul has been sick. But now he is fairly well. I am to greet you so much from him,

and ask you if you have played much on the great Fiddle of yours for the American people. Tarjei Lunde brawls and lies the same as before. Olaf Jonsberg has two children and otherwise is the same. Old Mattisen brawls well. The younger one keeps on with the tailoring and keeps orderly. Høie Posmyr struggles on the same. O. Staaland will work hard "one of these days" just as usual you know. Yes now is Tov Aasen dead he died the 9 September and Gonil will come to Klevstul again with three children, yes it is bad for Gonil poor thing, for now it is not so good with Olaf either as vagabond-officer.

Yes for the rest here in Kvitsei it has been a good year with all kinds of crops, but forced Auctions and Bankruptcy follow with the day's end. Yes now I must end with begging you, that you will greet your parents and family most affectionately from us all --- but you are first and last greeted from your old. Yes so much I last of all bid you that you must not forget me. By writing as soon as possible. So it is in truth very enlivening for me to have a letter from America Aslak. If it would be possible for me to have your portrait so do it dear Aslak. Yes if it is possible of your parents also. We long so much for all of you.

Klevstul the 14 September 1888  
Most respectfully  
J. Thorsen

Live Well all of you is the wish of me and mine.  
Jon Holtevikken asks the same

Translator's note: I hope that the Houkom family will enjoy this letter by Johans Thorsen Klevstul as much as I do. Another one will appear later in the book.

I have purposely not tried to correct his punctuation and unorthodox use of capital letters. Typing out the translation has been a task needing great care. I have become (almost) accustomed to Svennung's use of capitals for most nouns and pronouns; but Johan's system is quite different, and I want you to appreciate his individual style. There are words omitted here and there, because his thoughts ran faster than his pen. I wish you could all read it in the original. His penmanship is beautiful but his own version of the ancient style used on some of the family documents.

The family in America would be very grateful for all the news of weddings and revival and other happenings back in their old home, and although we do not know many of those mentioned, I enjoy reading about them, and I hope you do, too.

The Aslak Hogen to whom he sends greetings is Aslak Haugen, youngest brother of Svennung, whose business activities gave Svennung so much trouble. Apparently he stirred up excitement during elections, also.

I was not sure about one of Johan's words, but I took it to be Røverbruser, and although the 'bruser' part is not in any of my reference books I have translated the whole word as Vagabond Officer. Røver is used for robber, bandit, tramp, highwayman, etc., and many country districts had an elected official whose duty it was to escort unwanted vagabonds out of the area, and see

them safely over the border into the next district. In peaceful times this was a sinecure, pay for no work, and a position of honor; but as the Sundbygd area, according to several letters, had become over-run with tramps and beggars, the vagabond officer's duties would be both difficult and dangerous. This seemed to fit the sentence in which Johan used the word in question. I hope I am not too far wrong.

I think the place Johan spells Byaenkbug is probably Brunkeberg, where the Houkom family sometimes went to church.

When he speaks of the cabin being moved from Kirkebakken (the Church Hill) to another site, he renames the old site Lompebakken, which would mean Shabby Hillside, or Fooled Hillside. He is a colorful character. D. R.

Svennung to Aslak 10/13/1889

13 October 1889

Dear Son!

Your welcome letter of 7<sup>th</sup> this month I received the 10<sup>th</sup> and see with happiness in it that you are still well and active, which is the best good a man can wish for in the world. Since our return home 1st Sunday I have had a bad cold, but hope that it will soon be better, and in other ways I am just as well as your mother, who as usual has uncomplaining health and fitness. Mother and I thank you so much for your loving care of us. It is so good and strengthening for us old ones to see such loving care for our welfare as you in your letter bring to light. But God be thanked you do not need to strain yourself any longer for us. From your quotation from Anne's letter I understand that she has now, as usually, written briefly and indiscreetly so one can draw various conclusions from her short sentences. I remember well what I wrote for your mother to her on the aforementioned occasion, and I believe that I can state for you the words, so you can judge for yourself if it can be interpreted as such a far-reaching complaint. "Today I washed mine and your father's linen and underclothes which I was finished with a little before coffee time, and as I was therefore tired I laid myself down on the bed to rest a little, and asked your father to say when he went down that I had laid down and wanted to rest a little. In one hours time I got up and went down into the kitchen where the coffee pot stood on the stove. I sat down there in the hope that I would have my coffee but when I understood that I wouldn't get any I went out with the food for the pigs which I was surely allowed to do, as it is not hard to understand that I'd little." I have experienced the same thing several times both for myself and Hans when we don't get home at the stated coffee time, notwithstanding that being at work on the new land which lies 1.5 miles from our home hindered us from being back at the right time. We who worked the hardest therefore had to keep going until the evening meal was ready, so that those who were at home got coffee as well as the evening meal. Under such conditions nobody can wonder about us wishing for a change, and so it is very encouraging to receive a letter like your last one which shows such concern for us. Concerning your separate question to "Mother" you certainly know that I am not the first up in the morning when Tor is home, but when he is away I have been. Whether I have any especial wish for the future I must answer thereto, that I am convinced that you do it in the best way for us and therefore I am well contented. — In reference to my foregoing expression that you do not still need to strain yourself further for us that is based on a great change which has taken place with Marie after we came home from Goose River. She is quite unlike herself, and we don't know what the reason is. Your Mother thinks that Anders may have spoken to Olaf about her behaviour towards us, but I rather think that our absence served to open her eyes to the fact that we are not without use to her, as well as the respect we are given by others certainly contributes much to the change. Certainly if it remains as it has been for the last 8 days we shall have nothing to complain about, and it will be good for the whole house if that happens. We had a very enjoyable trip to Goose River. Olaf Thorstad whom Anders stays with drove us around to visit with the farmers one day, and at all places we were met with Joy, and your Mother received many gifts. It gladdens us greatly to hear that you have received such an offer again, but how do you think you will manage in the winter? With loving greetings and wishes for your future welfare I sign myself, your devoted father.

S. O. Houkom

(Marginal Notes): How did you do with the long-discussed trip to Hans or rather in the land

affair? In the morning I shall begin to work in the church again, but I don't know how long it will be. I can greet you from Anders I recently had a letter from him. He and the sisters are well.

Johans Thorsen Klevstul to Aslak 11/4/1890

Good-day and thanks for the last, Aslak - -

Yes I have certainly received your two letters Aslak, and am ashamed of myself therefore - - but the reason is this, that I have had so little to write about but now all at once I have remembered altogether something that you shall hear Aslak. First I must tell you that Smeland and Bjaenk have bought your birthplace Hokum. For Kroner 7000 and now the 5 September was the Assessment Bjaenk got the Northern part. The division goes from the path to Noristogo and down in the Northern Log House and in the wood down to the road, till it takes off from the road which goes up through Slaemdal by Hegni. But Olaf Staalnd promises trouble. They shall be quit of it he says. Yes so I can tell you that at Noristogo Hokum has been assessed and over assessed and the total was the same, Kroner 14 thousand and 5 hundred and this Kittil must certainly pay out at District Meeting the 20 October. But the wise say that the bag was full of tricks. Yes perhaps you don't know that Kittil came to Sundbygd again in September he would take Hokum again from Jon. But he made the trip home in vain - - but he promises that he will hold at the meeting to his inheritance rights as long as he has anyone to meet with. Bjørn Gadeholt has sold Kirkebø to writ for Kroner 11 thousand. But now it is said that Old Aslak will take it again and have it for himself and his wife as long as they live. And later try to help Knut. Yes Knut has certainly thrown himself away, as you know well already. Yes you asked about Gulmund Klefstul. Yes to that I shall answer, he has been very limber lately. But it looked strange the first time the Pastor was there. He showed him out and said that he would not see him any more in his house. But it was not many days after, before he regretted what he had done and got Gunnar to fetch the Pastor again and then they were well reconciled. You know Gulmund was strange.

A bad wedding

You know that Gonar was finally married to the widow after Torjus Lia and he thought, certainly, he was quite the fellow you know. But then both his caution and his importance became pure manure. Fore she hadn't been there three months before she played the fool, and would not lie with him for she got rheumatism and left him for Margit Stenkosa - - but then it was quiet again - - but in summer she began again to dance in earnest. Then she took off from Klefstul in the afternoon with her children, and in her ragged dress went to Londe, and from there to Lompebakken, and she got there at 12 o'clock in the night. So Gonar came to me in the morning and asked how he should act. I answered that he should go down to the sheriff and he did so. And so they got hold of the Pastor so they found her at Stenkosa and there the Pastor worked with her until she became pliable again. But Gunder had to travel home again, she would not be with him home again. But so there came a message to him late in the evening and so he travelled down again and then she came up with him again. And the next day the Pastor came up to Klefstul and both two of them confessed to him. Yes now you should see Gonar Aslak. He creeps around just like the Moon when it is waning.

Yes you asked after Thov Aasheim's death, he was hit in the crotch by an oak he was felling. And so one of his testicles swelled up, so he had to go to Kristiania and there it was removed. And that caused his death, but he came home again and lived for 14 days. Gunil with her 3

children had to go to her parents again. She gets from the poor office 2 hundred Kroner a year. Yes Nori HYTEBY lives fairly well, there is no shortage of either ale or dancing be it weekend or middle of the week, in summer post opener Nes got permission from the Parish Council to sell ale. Isn't that strange in Kvitesei you think. But now we have made some lists and got folk who are against ale-selling to write on them and if the council will not do anything it will be brought up at the Storting.

Translator's note: His spellings of Gunnar, Gonar, and Gunder, apparently all refer to the same person. D. R.

Johans Klevstul to Aslak

11/4/1890

New Made from Old

I can now tell you that Johans Kirkebøen is married for 3 time to a young girl from Morgedal. Daughter of Gunder Ølkosi. And I believe that this marriage has been arranged with writs ale. She gave birth in the summer, and now in these days is first wed. Yes you can believe it is strange in Hytelyn. Stone Gaar will open his own business one of these days in his own building. Gunder Bakar has taken a business license and trades well. The Smith in town had in the summer in great thirst taken himself a drop too much of Nes Ale. And began to hammer and beat up his wife. This had almost ended at the Sheriff's. Yes I could tell much about the Town. But now I am tired of the whole Dung-heap. Yes you are probably waiting to hear news about us here at Klefstul. We are all fairly well Aslak. But I have not been able o read or write but now I am getting better. But I had better not complain because it is that way with old folk. As it is with Barrel Staves, they dry out and twist up. Wetle and Anne manage well. They work for me. Turi is home in the winter she says that she wants to go to America in the spring. They say that she is after Thor Posmyr. Ragnil Posmyr will be married to one from Møstraandi who works for the veterinarian, and is named Rikar. Yes it is a great name, but I think poor Rikar suits him best. Tarje Lunde has 6 children now and manages well. Olaf Jonsborg has 2 children and works now and then. Per Stenrud and Gonil Strive mightily. Østen Orli and Anne manage well. Mattisen is the same. Gunder Hogan, and Jon Holtevika are the same. You would perhaps like to know a little about crops in Sundbygd. This year it was an average year. Poor much of the time, here it is not only Kaplan who fells trees in the autumn. I very much long for the Canal to be finished between Ulefoss and Straengen. I expect then you will come home and look around Aslak. Tarjei has said that he thinks of coming home one day. I have had a letter from him but I have not had a letter from Thor since May of last year. I do not know if he is alive or dead. Yes now I will beg you Aslak that when you have read this poor letter you will send it to your father. For I owe him a letter. And say that I have no more news to tell and that I dread writing so much. And say that he must not think that I have forgotten him. And if he wants to write to me once more and see if I could be more cheerful. I hope that you do this Aslak.

I can't get any answers about Knut Boerdal I have asked the veterinarian but he doesn't know and I wrote to Olaf Floten at Neslan but got no answer. But I shall still do what I can. Aslak. Yes so to finish I shall greet you so much from all of mine to you and your parents and brothers and sisters Aslak. But both first and last you are all greeted from the old one at Klefstul. Yes I hope that you write at the first that you can and tell me much.

Don't forget to send this letter to your father, and let me kill two birds at one time Aslak.

Klefstul the 4 November 1890 Live well all the same is wished by me.

Respectfully J. Thorsen

Write Write Aslak -----

Aslak to Thora      11/12/1890      Mekinock, N. Dak. November 12<sup>th</sup> 1890

Dear sister Thora!

Now I am sitting in brother Olaf's light livingroom, I hear how mother talks and tends to Johan in the kitchen. Marie is roasting pork so it smells good in here and Olaf is in the bedroom washing himself, after having arranged various things. A while ago Father went out to Venaas River after wood. - - I finished work for the Yankee on Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup> of this month, and I was very glad to be "let out on the town". I have still not visited any of my friends or relatives here; there is so much that has to be done before winter arrives and so I think I can just as well help them a little when they are so busy. Yes we are all busy; but no one hurries. Father thinks it is "horribly cold" here and he is therefore not very anxious to look for land this autumn. Axel Lieberg who was going with us has also given up the trip, and so I have to let the matter rest at present. Thus there can be no talk of "keeping house" in the near future. I should very much like to have a place I could call my home. But it seems to me as though it will still take several years before I can dare to "start" on my own. - - If the Red Lake Reservation is opened for settling in the spring I will try to secure a quarter for myself there. But it is so uncertain whether it will be opened. I expect that you are now tired of shop life. I will beg one thing of you and Anne, that you don't over-exert yourselves for money's sake. Don't stay at home by yourselves too much; for that tempts one to become peculiar and withdrawn. I made that mistake while I was in Minneapolis that I kept myself too much at home and didn't seek other places enough, where I could have been cheered and edified. - - I still don't know what I shall be working at this winter. I know one thing however, and that is that I could benefit from some English schooling; because I am still a very poor fellow in English.

I have no news, as I haven't received any letters for a long time. The farmers around here are all busy building themselves big houses now. G. Stastad has flitted down to Dok and has built a great house and a "barn". P. Stevsen and Eli have built a beautiful big house. The churches have been improved and fixed up a little in various ways. The women down in Middle Grove congregation are now working with basket parties and other activities to procure an organ for the church. Here in Ness the women have many parties to make money for the Church. Parties, that is to say to come and talk scandal and gossip together around a meal. Miss Nelly Johnson keeps school here; she boards here at Olaf's. He bids me greet you. I must try to write a better letter another time.

You are both heartily greeted.

Your devoted but vacillating brother Aslak.

Svennung to Aslak 3/13/1891

March 13th 1891

Dear Son!

Many thanks for your most interesting letter and enclosed photograph which I received the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month. It was a good portrait, but I would have thought even better of it, if the whole chest had been visible. I am the kind of person who makes as much of a man's figure as of his face and therefore think that it is a mistake to obscure anything; on a brush picture I think that the whole figure to below the chest should clearly show. But the photographers now have so many whims, and so it is probably a fashion connected with the art also, as with all else. I beg your pardon for expressing my opinion of your writing to Hans, for in this case I see now from your letter that the mistake lies with him. Which also is confirmed by the fact that he has still not answered either of my last two letters to him. I don't understand what is the problem unless it is that he far too much lets himself be influenced by his half. I have been thinking back to her return from Telemark and later behaviour in Minneapolis and think that there in all her conduct lies a great scorn for all of us, but I hope very much that I am mistaken about this. But if there is any basis for my conclusion it will certainly also have the effect on Hans in the same direction. It is amazing in any case. Anders said in his first letter after New Year that Hans had written to Thora, and so I bade him to share with me the main contents of that when he the next time sent me a letter. Now a few days since I received another letter from him, and in that he says that it only concerned a package which she (Thora) and Anne had sent for Christmas and which had not arrived. And then he wrote "He speaks with great praise of your interesting letter to him after Christmas. - - I have a feeling that (I for my part anyway) that we stay away from Hans too much. He certainly strives very hard in his way and certainly has heavy times".

It seems evident from his remarks that he likes our letters also, but why then doesn't he answer them? I must say it is incomprehensible for me, and I often wish that I was over there with him personally to investigate the whole affair.

I have the news to tell you that Anne Ness about six weeks ago gave birth to a large and well-formed daughter who in Baptism received the name Thone. Your mother was down there for 14 days and came back at the end of last week and at that time all was well both with her and the child and also with the other children.

Helleik has now tried his new Violin, it is somewhat rough toned, but is however inconceivable after being made from one kind of wood all through. He and Hans are now making preparations to send a ticket to their brother Kittil who will come over here in the spring. And so it will probably not be long before the whole family is here. It went very well with the varnishing for Helleik, since it was the first time he had tried it.

Hanna Stadstad is still at home with Father and Mother and will be at home the whole winter she said when we last spoke to her. She has not been very well in the winter but was now much better and would therefore rather be at home. She had not either had a letter from Sangstads since she came home she said, which she thought was strange, but it could also be the same, she said.

Here with us there is no other change except that Marie becomes more and more plump and round every day so it looks as if it won't be long into the summer before she must bring forth. Your Mother uses the Belt\* sometimes, and seems to be better with it.

Herewith a loving greeting from us, and a wish for future luck and happiness to follow you.

Your S. O. Houkom

(Marginal Notes): Are you coming over here when your school is finished? Have you received a letter from Tarjei Klevstul or any from Kvideseid? Write again as soon as you can.

Have you read the petition Hans has written in "Normanden" as far as I recall of the 18<sup>th</sup> of last month? It is fairly lively, so I recognize him well again there.

Translator's Note: \*I am not sure about the word which I have translated as 'Belt'. It is perhaps a girde or surgical corset, but it is not clear in any of my reference books.

Helleik is perhaps another 'hired boy', as the name has not previously occurred in the family. The Hans mentioned as helping to get a ticket for Kittil is not the Hans Houkom, brother to Aslak, mentioned in the first part of the letter. I am not sure which Hans is quoted as writing a petition in the American-Scandinavian publication, "Normanden".

Anders to Anne 5/19/1891 (Addressed to 1315 7<sup>th</sup> Str S. Minneapolis)

Mekinock, 19 May 1891

Dear Sister!

Now I am sitting here sheltered and dry in the Pastor's office while the wind howls and the rain splashes against the panes. I have also safely arrived. We parted "with the hope of a happy reunion" and then the moment of parting is not so heavy. "The friends of Christ nowhere see each other for the last time" says Grundtvig. - -

When I came up on Nicolet Ave I met a student; he would have passed as though he had never seen me. When I blocked the way for him he became very serious but then immediately became mild and we parted like good friends. When I came to the Union Depot I stood in the doorway; a student went by, looked me in the face, but went on stiff and silent. I then went in to look up one of my best friends, Broen, who was to travel the same evening; but he put on such an amazed look, when I went over to him and said: so you are here already? That I burst out laughing. As I stood there a student came up behind me and laid his hand on my shoulder. I turned quickly and looked him straight in the eyes. He started back a couple of steps with his mouth open ready to shout! I beg your pardon, sir, I am mistaken! But I got in ahead of him by saying: oh, is it you? Oh the great world, how soon a man can be treated coldly and unkindly, yes, treated like a stranger by his best friends; and think, only because one bought a white straw hat and went in to a barber on the way and there lost his - - moustache. - - Poor folk, they didn't know me.

Naturally, I had great fun over the whole thing. Sleepless hours pass slowly, pass by singing, when one goes on board a train to travel all night. However, the time went fairly well; for I had good company in Broen. A little past 10 o'clock I saw Ness Church, the schoolhouse, and "a country parsonage". From Mekinock one has to walk back along the railroad for 1 mile in order to meet "the pastor and his wife". That one mile went fast. Outside the parsonage walked father \*\* with his rake in his hand, singing a beautiful hymn for Pentecost. "So you finally come now, you," he greeted me. "Have you perhaps been waiting?" I asked. "Yes, I've been twice to Mekinock with the horse and buggy to meet you, but nobody came." I saw mother's and John's faces in the window, and so I had to go in. So the questions came thick and fast, beginning with people and things in Minneapolis and spreading to Blair, back to Taylor and M. and ending for that time with questions concerning the changes that had happened under my nose. - - Mother is well except that she sometimes has headaches. Father is completely healthy and active. — On Pentecost Olaf drove to Middlegrove where he held confirmation. In Ness church a layman conducted the service and Olaf asked me to help him; so there were two speakers in Ness church that day.

A spiritual movement has begun here in Ness congregation. One man has been awakened and several affected. If only the Pastor can now take the leadership and lead it in a wholesome direction, so that the awakened do not become the prey of sects. This seems to be a gratifying sign and a great encouragement in his work for Olaf if only he will now take advantage of it --.

The second day of Pentecost confirmation was held in Ness church. It was overflowing with

people and considerable emotion, as is normal on a confirmation day! I met several acquaintances and as usual I was invited both hither and yon. After the service several invited to dinner at the parsonage. When this was cleared away everything was arranged in the front room; for Curate No. 2\*\* was to be baptized. I was the Godfather together with Halvor and Bergit Haugen. Can you guess what name he was given? Shut your eyes again and guess! It was just as I thought, you couldn't guess it; for he is called Svenung Marius. Huf! That Marius could be done without.

Pentecost evening I met Gudbran who was driving around his wheat with his daughter Hanna, who is now free and very glad about it. She has given up both the job and the boy at Sangstad's. It was badly done. She has not behaved rightly there, I understand. Now Emma by Bertine Wenaas are confirmed. Plans for the future are being made now by Karin, I think. Next Sunday I shall go with Olaf over to the Minnesota side, where he will hold his commemoration service.

It is beautiful here on the Dakota prairie, now that the grass is growing, the woods showing green, and the meadow lark sings its trills from fence-posts and bushes. Father went to visit Olaf and Anne (Ness Saltevje) yesterday. He had worked a fine knife and sheath for Svenung \*\*\* and so he took some clothes, which lay in your chest and set off with them. It is great fun to talk to father and mother, one feels oneself so whole minded and secure. Hans is plowing and sowing, Kjetil is planting trees, and the Pastor looks on.

Greet Inger and fam. Both you and Thora are fondly greeted from your brother Anders.

(Marginal note) Address letters to Mekinock.

Translator's Notes: \* Anders description of his father when they met is written in the Telemark dialect, but all the rest of the letter is written in plain Norwegian. Anders frequently 'breaks into dialect', especially when writing to Aslak. He uses it often in a humorous way.

\*\*Curate No. 2 is a humorous reference to Olaf's second son, born sometime after Svennung Houkom's letter of March 13.

\*\*\* This Svennung, the son of Anders' older sister Anne, is the boy who had whooping cough during the journey over from Norway.

Hans, who is plowing, is probably the brother of Helleik, referred to in Svennung's last letter, and Kjetil is probably the Kittil for whom Hans and Halleik were providing a ticket to emigrate. New immigrants were a constant source of cheap labour for those who had been here long enough to get land; but they stayed only long enough to earn what they needed for progress to something better. D.R.

Dear Son!

It is now a long time since I set pen to paper, but I will try now to send you a few lines to inform you of the situation here which on the whole is very miserable. I have been sick ever since the funeral and I am still, but I seem to be much easier now after having been cupped and bled, so I have bit by bit become stronger again as my appetite is also much better now. Both of the little boys suffer from whooping cough, and little Svenung is especially much harder inflicted, so many times it looks as though it is all over for him. John is stronger and still doesn't seem to suffer too greatly from it, but he has also had it later. Thora came to us on Friday last week, and Hanna was here till she came. It was a great joy for us that Thora came, but it looks as though it will be the opposite for herself, but it can also be much better than expected according to how the conditions appear to those present. Thora has become so thin, it seems to me, but she says she is well and just as eager with the accomplishment of her duties. Hans Hougeland has also become very sick, and I fear that it is nerve fever which has attacked him. Yesterday he went to Grafton to an American Doctor who is said to be clever (Jakobsen has gone to Norway) and he said he has a fever, but nothing more, but all the signs seem to indicate Nerve Fever, so he may be ill for a long time. Anders left today for Minnesota and should begin with the school there tomorrow. It has therefore become very busy for Olaf who is now alone with the whole set-up as I cannot be of any help and it is uncertain when I will be well enough that I can get to work again. But I feel fairly well now and hope to win strength with every day.

Olaf and Anne (Saltevej) have still not gone to Kitson's. They were ready to set out and decided to get on the way last Wednesday morning, but Tuesday evening Jonas came back from there and told that there in some places it was so 'bad that he with a big load and a team could not manage, and so they were agreed to go together to help each other on the way there.

But on Sunday it rained heavily again here, so they had to postpone the trip still more days. I have been told that over there near Saltstuen in Tollef Dok's neighborhood, lies a great deal of free land, including at least 80 acres of good hayland. I have recently become aware of this and have because of my sickly condition still not seen it. But even if it is only exclusively hayland I think that it must come to have a not so little value in such a convenient place, because already questions are being asked around here about hayland. I have therefore thought that this opportunity should not be overlooked, but to ensure oneself of it would entail about \$15.00 and at the moment I own no money. I therefore wished to know what you think about it and whether you could advance the needed sum until later. I would rather have postponed the matter until you come here, but one can not be quite sure that it wouldn't be taken up within that time. Or what do you think about looking at some other place in the autumn and in that case it would be more advantageous if I saved my land rights so that we could take up land by the side of each other, for you know that I can't manage us to live on for the time we have left to fumble here in this – yes I should probably say excellent land – but I really think it does not deserve its reputation. I must request your answer as soon as possible. Herewith a loving greeting and wishes for future luck and happiness in all your undertakings.

S. O. Houkom

(Marginal Note) N.B. There would not be much to hinder taking one 80 acres in one place, and an 80 ar. In another as a homestead. I know many have done it.

Translator's note: Olav's wife, Marie, died shortly before this letter was written, hence Thora's arrival to take care of the new baby and little John. She stayed with Olaf until he married his second wife in 1893. Olaf's parents were neither young enough or well enough to take on the house and farm work without help, with Olaf busy as pastor to at least three parishes.

Hans Hougeland is the hired boy mentioned in the last two letters.  
D.R.

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(P. 75) Svennung to Anne July 21, 1891

Dear Daughter!

Again more than a month has passed since I received your last letter. We have been very busy in recent times here as you certainly understand, and in addition I have been very sick with influenza and rheumatism so my letter writing has been totally set aside. You say in the letter I mentioned, "It is so sad in Minneapolis now", and with seeing those words of yours again I came to think, what if Anne doesn't think it sad now when Thora has left her, I believe I must try to send her a letter as a little encouragement. I can greet you with gladness that your mother is quite well now, and I am also better every day, so I now have a good appetite again, and I am about the same as before. Olaf and Thora are both well, but the children are badly plagued with whooping cough, and especially the youngest is very sick so that it is more uncertain whether he will be able to get over it. Hans Hougeland is also very sick, apparently of influenza. He went to Grafton to a Doctor 8 days ago, he used up the obtained medicine, which it seems was no use, and went yesterday to Gr. Forks either to go into the hospital, or to seek another private doctor. It is bad for him, he is such a kind boy, and as he was hired boy here as you well know, Olaf has had to get himself another. Yes, we have here had a very unsteady summer temperature. Far too much rain, which leads to damp raw air, then the warm southerly wind, and afterwards very sharp cold air, so long since I have said that doubtless there will be much sickness here through the summer, and already the results are showing themselves very strongly. Who could have thought that Marie who had always been so well would have been the first to wander away from this house. "Think of it you who are old," You say somewhere in your letter, "that time is short", but here it is shown that the young as well as the old need to heed the exhortation, and that we all have more than enough with ourselves. Let us always remember this dear daughter and watch that we don't think ourselves better than our fellow men, which thought always can so easily creep in, and flatter out own ego, and which is one of the worst sins to part ourselves from, namely, self-love. Yes, Marie was not to be the only young strong woman here in Ness congregation to wander away from this busy earthly life. 8 days ago there was another funeral when a 19 or 20 year strong and vigorous wife, Mrs. Kaasa was laid to her last rest. She was of German birth but married a year ago to a boy from Kaasa in Bøe. A brother of Andreas Helleksen's wife if you know her or Anne who is married to Bernhard Sillerud who is the 2<sup>nd</sup> sister. And yesterday night Olaf Sanden's beloved and lovely wife went with death in childbirth and the child lives after her. It must be a heavy loss for Olaf for she is especially well talked of

among all and I remember that you also spoke of this wife so praisingly. It is not happy news I have to tell you this time, but we must not expect that it will always be happiness we have to report to each other, for that would not be consistent with this world's uncertainty. Therefore let us rejoice with the happy and grieve with the sorrowing. –

Aslak was here for Marie's funeral but went back to Northwood where he again has 1 month's school. When he is finished with it he will come to work during harvest for the same man he was with last summer south of here at Emerad. He looked good and is also very well now usually. In a letter from Knut Skodbakken I received greetings from Olaf Staalane. He lives just the same, he said no news however. If you have had a letter from Norway you must let me know what news it contains. Greet Inga Ness from us most affectionately, and say that it gladdens us much that you have such a faithful friend. Now you are herewith greeted from Father and Mother who wish to hear again of your health.

Your S. O. Houkom.

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(P. 76) Aslak to Thora      May 6, 1892

Hatton, N. Dak 6<sup>th</sup> May 1892

Dear Sister Thora!

Although I have nothing special to write about, I will scrape together a few lines for you; for it is so long since I wrote to you, and so when I send you a few lines you will owe me some again. It is always good to have something owing. Yesterday and today we have had sleigh-road-conditions. It is really fine here in Dakota, where one can have a sleigh-ride in May month. How does father like the landscape here now after all this much and now a snowstorm on top? He probably thinks, as is reasonable, that it is completely disgusting to live here.

Yes, there certainly isn't a really healthy climate here, I think. Last night I didn't have it so good. I had colic yesterday evening and had it the whole night, so I got very little sleep. I had to keep getting up to stoke the stove so that I could "bake" my hands on the stove-plate for most of the night; to sit upright was just about impossible, for my stomach was as upset as if there were 2 or 3 cats sharpening their claws in there. Now I am much better, but far from well. It was really a "hard job" to keep school today.

Now I have had school for 1 ½ months. What shall I do then? Now - yes - that day - that worry. John is probably a big boy now, I suppose. Ask him if he remembers uncle. Tell him I will come to him in the summer with candy.

I should probably end this now. Write to me when you have a little time. It would be interesting to hear how you are doing with your friends and your enemy. Greet all at home. You yourself are heartily greeted from your devoted

A. S. Houkom

Translator's Note: After comparing the penmanship of this letter with that of previous letters, I decided that this was written by Aslak, not by Anders, who was also A. S. Houkom.

I have found nothing in any of the letters to indicate who Thora's "enemy" might be. Aslak was fond of joking, so it may be a reference to one of the farm animals that had given Thora a problem; or it could be a neighbor.

#### WHO WAS ANNA?

The next several letters, the last of those I have which were written before 1900, are all to Thora from her friend Anna. No last name is given. The writer was not either of Thora's sisters named Anne. The older Anne was living with her husband and family, presumably at Kitson's wherever that was. The younger Anne was still in Minneapolis, where she lived with Thora until Thora had to come and help Olav.

This "new" Anna writes first from Granville P.O., which I think must be the Granville a few miles east of Minot, North Dakota. The rest of her letters are written from Grand Forks, where she is going to school. Her letters show that she is well acquainted with the family, fond of the two little boys, and she refers to Thora's mother (presumably) as "Grandma", although it is of course possible that her own Grandma may be a neighbor of the Houkom's.

All the letters are written in the last few months of Olaf's widowhood. My theory is that she is the Anne J. Dahlum, who became Olaf's second wife in 1893. So far none of Olaf and Anne's grandchildren have been able to confirm this theory, but two have told me that their Grandma was known as Anna, rather than Anne. However, the Norwegian pronunciation of Anne accents the final 'e'. The fact that her letters have been kept seems to indicate that she was someone of importance to the family. D.R.

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(P. 77) Anna to Thora    September 24, 1892

Granville P. O.

My Dear Friend

Your welcome letter was received last week for which I say so many thanks, it gladdens me to see that you are all well and that little Marius has become so clever I must say that I really long to see you all, and mostly you and your hair. But I hope that I shall soon have the time and opportunity to visit you. I can now tell you that we are busy with the singing society, here today we had a meeting of school teacher Jakobsen and sang of the song chorus and it went very well, and two weeks from today we shall have a school party in the schoolhouse and I hope that we shall have a lovely and happy party day. I am sure we shall grieve when Jakobsen leaves for there has not been a Sunday since he came here without us getting together to sing and hear God's word expounded and every Wednesday evening we have met here at our home and sung so that we have had a really beautiful and happy summer altogether.

I must now tell you that I have been away for two weeks and worked it was during the threshing

at Ole Bang's, and I had a dollar a day there but it was the hardest time I have ever lived I didn't go to bed before 12 o'clock any evening and up again at 3 o'clock, but I shall say it was two hard weeks, I am sorry to hear that Alfhilda did not come and visit you in the summer but you are sure of her for Christmas and that is certainly just as much fun.

I am sure that you have had a hard summer this summer Thora if you had not I would wish that I could come and be with you again Thora when Anne leaves but unfortunately I can't now for I have thought that I will go to Grand Forks in the winter to a sort of school for one must use as much time as possible to learn something good and useful.

I must now end my writing for this time with a diligent and loving greeting to you all, but first and last you are greeted from

Your friend Anna.

Live well and greet John and Marius.

Write back soon.'s

(Marginal Note) I have now re-sewn the green dress which I had and so I send you a piece of the trimming.

First the cross and the crown, then the fight and then eternal peace.

Translator's note: The mention of a friend named Alfhilda in this letter strengthens my feeling that this Anna may be "Grandma" - Olaf's second wife, as they named one of their daughters Alvilde (Aunt Bidda to a younger generation). Apparently Thora's youngest sister, Anne, had been home for summer vacation from Minneapolis. Anna's punctuation and capitalization do not always follow the rules of grammar. I do not correct them. As a retired teacher of young children, I am amazed that these writers of the last century do as well as they do, considering the fact that the luckiest ones usually had no more than two or three months of schooling a year, for just a few years. They do far better than many students of the 1950's - 1980's who have had 12 full years of school; I do not intend to be critical when I comment on the punctuation, etc. I merely point out that these omissions are not typing errors on my part. D.R.

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(P. 78) Anna to Thora      November 16, 1892

Grand Forks

Dear Friend Thora!

I received your welcome letter a few days ago, for which I say so many thanks I see from your letter that you believe that I bear no love for you, now when it was so long before, you wrote. But it is not accidental, Thora you are certainly forgiven, for I know now what you have to struggle with, I see from your letter that you are very busy, I for my part think, it is far too much work for you, you must not work and toil until you become sick for then it is too late to reconsider. I see from your letter that you are all well it makes me happy to hear, I can also

inform you the same from me, that I am well and go to the school every day. You can not believe how pleasant and beautiful it is up here, there are prayers and singing both morning and evening, so it is really lovely for those who - care about it but there are certainly few of them, however perhaps it is probably not so good to say so either, perhaps the heart is better than the deeds.

They now have Sunday School there at the school but I have not had time to go yet I should like to be with them but when one must go to church in the morning and, afterwards fix dinner when one comes home so there is so little time left over, also I have about a mile to walk, now I have to use flannel I too now Thora there was one day when it was so cold and I began to freeze on the way to school also I could sit and freeze half the day sometimes, and so I thought it was best to try with flannel and now I have been all right since; I have now begun to learn to crochet, Miss Sanbek that is a girl who has stopped here all the time since I came here to Berg, today she went home she was so clever to do all kinds of handwork, and she was so kind that I grieve since she has gone.

How is Anne is she still with you? Or has she gone to Mineapol when will Alfhilde come and visit you then will it be at Christmas or will it not be till the summer,

Have you received the black wool which I sent you? The white wool you shall have later you must not think that it is forgotten but I had no opportunity to get more sent that time.

(Upside-down, at tops, up and down sides and middle –)

With a diligent and loving greeting to you all, for I am your true friend Anna.

Give little Marius a kiss from me, greet John as well as all the others.

I also send you a photograph it is not anything very fine but it must be better than nothing.

Live well my Thora and write soon.

Don't forget to greet Grandma, she shall have my photograph soon.

When you write don't forget to send me a ??? (Translator's note: the last work is totally illegible scribble which I cannot decipher. D.R.)

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(P. 79) Anna to Thora December 1, 1892

Grand Forks

(Written in English at the top of the page;) Drink you te think of me. Drink it hot forget me not.

My Dear Friend ?

I will in this evening time take my pen and send you some lines, I have now been to school today and everything goes on the same as before. Esten Sanden has also come to the school; he and his sister were on the train on Sunday evening when I and Johane came back. But she apparently

went home again.

I had a guest yesterday evening namely your brother Aslak I sent some silk ribbons with him it was only 10 yard but I shall see whether I can't find a little more but I could not find more of the same sort the same afternoon so you must forgive me. I was out in the afternoon and bought it and then I met Aslak in the street but I would not recognize him although it isn't too long since I saw him. We came sometimes to the train you can believe, and sat for a whole hour in Mekinock and waited it happened by accident that day so that it said 6 o'clock instead of 5. We also went up and visited Mrs. Hilden. She now has a hired girl it is a sister or niece of Mr. Hilden so she certainly doesn't have it as hard now as she did before.

Johane had photographs taken on Monday before she went home I have seen samples of them and they are very good. You will probably receive one sometime before Christmas. You will also receive one of us two together and one of me with my winter outfit on. Tomorrow I shall go to see Pastor Jorgensen and see if I can stay there after Christmas, I wish very much that I could stay there so I could take Huck lessons from her Mrs. Jorgensen, she is supposed to be a very fine teacher they say and now the girl who stays there will go away and then I thought that perhaps I could get in, and she has many little ones and be a bit of help to her I wish it anyway.

I must now begin to finish my simple writing for this time with a friendly and loving greeting sent to Olaf, John, Marius, Grandpa and Grandma Anne Aslak Gunnul and fireland, but first and last you are greeted from your true friend  
Anna

(Sideways at the top) Live well and write soon back to me. I send a kiss to little Marius.  
Goodnight (in English) Write soon.

---

(P. 80) Anna to Thora    December 11, 1892

Grand Forks C Lodge

Dear Friend!

I received your welcome letter a few days ago for which I say so many thanks, it gladdens me much to hear that you are all well and I can report the same for myself for every day! Which is the best of all that one can wish for. First I must tell you that I have moved from Berg and stay now at the school. Mrs. Toning wanted someone who worked, for food, and so she asked me if I would not like it better and stay up there, and so I thought it was just as good for me also to stay up there, also I don't need to work more than 3 hours every day, and so I don't have to hear all the time that I don't work enough when I have done my work I can go and study, at my lessons, and I like it better now than I did the first week when I stayed up here in the autumn, because I now stay in the same room as the hired girls, and they are both clever, and kind. I have been to church today, and in the evening so shall I also go again. We shall now have Sunday school in the evenings after this. Young people from the University shall come in to our Sunday School, and then they will teach it in the evenings so that the teachers and the young people can be free on Sunday afternoons.

I saw Gunvor in church today, but I didn't have a chance to talk to her, she was so dressed-up and fine that it was only with great difficulty that I recognized her.

I also saw Hans and Kjetil Hauglan but they apparently didn't know me, because he didn't even greet me.

(Upside down, at the tops of the pages) I am sending you a photograph, Hanna says that it looks more like me than the one you had from me before. Greet Olaf, father and Mother, Lars, Gunnul and Anne. Write soon.

Translator's note: This letter has no signature, but I judge the writer to be Anna on the basis of penmanship, style of notepaper, contents, and the fact that Anna had been living at Berg.

The two men who did not greet Anna are the ones who were hired by Olaf at Mekinock, Hans and Kjetil Haugland, referred to in previous letters. Anna omits their final 'd'. Because of the continuous arrival of new immigrants, who were willing to take on badly paid jobs at first, but moved to better opportunities as soon as possible, these two may no longer have been with Olaf. Perhaps Lars and Gunnul are now the hired men. In the last letter Anna sent greetings to Gunnul and Fireland. None of these names are in any family records, so they could have been hired men or neighbours. D.R.

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(P. 81) Anna to Thora    January 11, 1893

Grand Forks

Dear Friend Thora!

I will now take my pen and send you some lines it is now long since I received your welcome letter. And the fine gifts to me and Johane. Yes I can now say that they are beautiful, they are perfectly beautiful with the white trimming, hearty thanks you shall have both from me and Johane it will be kept as a memory from you as long as I live. Yes it gladdens me to hear that you are all well and I can so report the same from me, now I am fairly well now and I hope that I shall avoid being sick any more in the winter it is however very few times that I have been sick before as you also know well that it was certainly very few – times that I was sick when I was with you and worked. Yes that time will certainly never come back. They were surely the happiest days I have had. I would like to say they were better than home. You ask how much it cost that I bought for you the ribbons cost 20 cent and the other cost 40 cent namely 5 cent each. I asked about yard yesterday when I was down in my town. It was not available but spools I certainly think I can get if you should wish it, tell me when you write and what number or letter it is?

I had a letter from Johane today I must greet you from her they are all well and healthy at home while I sit and write so came father and I had an opportunity. To send Johane her bands.

Yes you can believe that we are busy here with learning lessons and washing dishes. You can believe that we have exercises which are good and besides we have lessons in crochet and so from a girl who rooms in the room with me she is from Tellemarken she knows Aslak and her

name is Ingebor Hauge. She is clever and friendly.

The sister of Mrs. Roalkvam who has been ill for such a long time, she is now approaching the end. Yes it is bad to see and hear her, they believed surely that she had slipped away from the vale of sorrows in the night, but it appeared that it was not so that the time had come that she should wander away from this vale of sorrows. Yes there is much to signify when one thing of such a one as her, she is so happy and contented about going. Yes it is no great matter to go to meet death when one is prepared and has given God one's heart. Yes and when the need is there one can take both opposition and success. Yes all that which comes you can accept as long as one has one's thoughts turned to him who can make us a happy life here on earth and a happier life after this.

Mrs. Tønning she has been so sorrowful and worried the last days it is so bad to see her now because formerly she has always been so lively and always had something to say but now there is only a weak smile to get from her when you meet her.

I must now tell you what kinds of studies I am taking up I have Reading Spelling Arithmatic Lanugage, P.M.ship Norwegian grammar and Norwegian reading and Norwegian is the finest of all for it is Roalvam who teaches them and he is so perfectly clever and friendly \*\*\* to each and all, and it is also that he strives to implant in our thoughts and so that we shall be friendly towards all and upright both in thought and deeds. Yes you should just hear how he talks for us sometimes and especially now since Miss Tønning became so ill.

\*\* Anna gives the names of her first five subjects in English, and I have reproduced her spelling just as she writes them. Apparently 'spelling' is not one of the words she has had yet in her 'speling' class. Again, I am not criticizing - knowing how many modern students goof up such words as 'language'. The word I have translated as 'friendly' in her description of Roalkvam actually means snug, cosy, or comfortable. D.R.

(P. 82) Sanden he has also been sick has not been to school this week he has influenza he can be glad that he doesn't stay up here for this is a bad place for those who are sick to get their health back there are a pair of boys who had to go home just because they were not strong enough to be here, Miss Vang the girl that I talked about when I was up there is now well again.

I see from your letter that you have the pillow finished for Aslak I can say that you have been very clever now when you have so much besides to do I think that it is strange that you get anything done who has the two small ones to take care of as well as all the other house work.

I must now end my simple writing for this time with a diligent and loving greeting to you all both big and small, but first and last you are greeted from your friend Anna.

Live well then and write soon.

P.S. Tell me if there is anything else I can buy for you, if I can't get the yard I shall anyway try one more time.

Don't forget to greet the little bouncer and John.

(Upside-down on top) you must excuse that I have used two kinds of pen.

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(P. 83) Anna to Thora      April 15, 1893

Grand Forks N.D.

Dear Thora!

Your welcome letter I received while I was at home, for which I will first and foremost say so many thanks it gladdens me to see that you did not forget to write to me either once in a while, for you know certainly that we have lived many happy and comfortable days together have we not? And it shall not be forgotten so soon from my side.

Yes I am now as you well know already back to school again, and everything is the same as of old, except that there are very few students there are certainly not many more than 30 now and I don't believe there will be any more this term because soon two weeks will have passed, yes time goes fast. Now we shall soon have the beautiful time which is called spring you certainly have much water around Mekinock and so, here is not so much water but so much more mud so that such days as today when it thaws a little so it is almost impossible to cross over the one street to the other. Yes soon John Marius and Auntie will go out in the garden and plant yes then it will be fun for the bouncer he has probably already begun to be out now already, the days when it is suitable and John he probably goes freely now he can open the door himself or perhaps Grandma is in the way for him, yes it is not good to be little either, I shall greet you so diligently from Johane she is busy now quilting she has a fine quilt finished when I was home and the other she began on so that I think she probably has that finished also, and I sewed on a new dress for her when I was home but none for myself, I had neither time nor means to sew for myself and for this reason that is how it is.

(Upside-down on top) You must forgive my bad writing it is done in haste. (No signature).

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(P. 84) Anna to Thora      April 25, 1893

Grand Forks

Dear Thora!

I have received your welcome letter and for which I say so many thanks, today it is winter again it doesn't look as if we shall have any spring this year, it must now look bad for these poor farmers also now who can't get anything done yes certainly it looks very bad.

The little bouncer probably had his birthday last Monday you must tell me whether he got any gifts, he should now have had a gift from Anna also but the coin purse is quite empty, but so it shall not be forgotten, it is also better late than never, isn't that true Thora, Many thanks for the pretty flower you sent me I almost believe it is just as green and pretty today, every time I see it I feel so lonesome and long to have a flower here, for I remember spring last year when you worked so hard with your flowers, how fast time goes, when we ran and carried them out for a little air, do you remember how the hens ran off with the pretty cutting you gave me? How is

your myrtle doing, has it died away or does it still live yes now we have no more than four weeks left of this term either, yes time goes and hurries away.

Yes now probably you have only two months left until you have been up here at Mekinock for two years and so but you probably think that the years have been long but I think they have gone unspeakably fast.

I can greet you from one of the sisters, I was at the hospital to see Miss Omang, she is striving now with the last Engstad has now given up all hope that she can come up again, I talked with the one of the sisters and she said that there was one thing which caught Miss Omang and that was that if she had only been ready to die so it would have been an easy thing for her even if she was so sick. But she would never think of dying, I think that it is so bad to think about her, who will thus lie there and so young as she is only 17 years old and very big a Johane and stronger to look at when she (upside down at the top) was up the Sisters thought that it was bad to think about but so did the best they can for her so they can not either do more for her, with a friendly and loving greeting to you all from your Anna.

(All around the edges and down the middle of the center pages of the letter) greet all and write soon greet Aslak when you write if he isn't at home my best wishes follow Marius for the new year greet him so diligently I have now soon finished the second lace which I've been working at we had a visit of Olaf also up here he has probably told you.

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(P. 86) Olaf to Aslak    January 4, 1906                      Mekinock N.D.

Dear brother!

Happy New Year! We have had a quiet but happy Christmas and we have celebrated it with perfect health except that little Hans had a slight attack of croup as soon as the new year had begun, so we kept him in bed a couple of days; but today he is as well and lively as usual. We have had Mr. Chr. Scherden with us for Christmas. He has finished his business in Park River and has visited us a couple of times previously in the autumn. Two days before Christmas he came again with a little spruce and complete decorations for a Christmas tree and gifts for us all even Carl Ingeman "our baby boy". You can believe there was happiness here! We thus got off very easily from it with just that part of the Christmas arrangements that really shouldn't be overlooked.

Some time ago we received some pictures from you. We thought they were very interesting and thank you very much.

A few days ago we heard that there would be good pay for shooting wolves in Roseau. When Mr. Scherden heard that, his hunting appetite woke up so he suggested that we should take off on a hunting trip. In order to have correct information, I was to write to you first, and beg for answers to some questions.

What is the bounty on wolves?

What is the closed season for deer and moose?

When does the closed season end?

How big is the fine if one shoots a moose in the closed season?

There is little likelihood that I can come away, but Scherden will probably come, as he has been a good hunter.

This is written at dusk, so you must excuse the haste.

With friendly greetings from us all

Your devoted brother

O.S. Houkom

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(P. 87) Olaf to Thora    March 29, 1906

(This is written on official paper with a much-printed letterhead)

P.N. Korsmo, President  
F. G. Enger, Vice-Pres.

Rev. O.S. Houkom, Sec  
Amund Ostmo, Treas

GRAND FORKS DEACONESS HOSPITAL

Board of Trustees: Peter N. Korsmo, F. G. Enger, O. S. Houkom, Amund Ostmo, Halvor P. Haugen, Peter A. Lieberg, N. H. Berg

Dear Sister!

It is possible that I have received the letters that you have sent me, but it often happens that I lay aside letters which don't exactly concern business, and intend to wait for a better time to answer them later, and then I am liable to forget them, as I receive quite a number of letters, which concern business and they must certainly be given consideration before anything else according to the American proverb: "Business before pleasure".

One of your chain letters I sent to Gunnar Korsmo and the other I return herewith accompanied by 10 cents. I wrote myself three letters and sent one to Syver Swenson, Mekinock, one to H. A. Trazelton, who lives 6 miles west of Northwood, and one to Ole O. Overland, Church's Ferry, N.D.

You should now have a "baby portrait" again, but the first dozen have gone long since, but as there are several of our relatives who did not get a portrait of Carl Ingeman, I shall soon order another dozen, and then you and the others will certainly be remembered.

This summer you must bring your husband with you and come here for a visit. There are many of your younger relatives here, whom you have not seen, and those you have seen, have grown unrecognizable. We owe the Lord much gratitude and praise for our children. They are both well formed and healthy, have good ability and learn easily, so they are ahead of most of their age groups in knowledge.

I had a desire to take a visiting trip to Roseau, but in consideration of diminishing income and

increasing family I can spend neither money nor time traveling except when essential.

We are all well and greet you and Mr. Mayer most affectionately.

Your devoted brother,

O. S. Houkom

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(P. 88) Anders to Father      September 10, 1906      Portland N. Dak

Dear Father!

I am sending you a few words to inform you that we arrived home safely long ago. Everything was in good shape at home. We stopped 2 days in Grand Forks on our way home. We also made a swing up to Mekinock to greet brother Olaf and family. It was raining that day so we had good time to talk even though it was the middle of the harvest. We had a happy time there with conversation and music. Olaf has bought a fine and good piano and Marie Olaf's eldest daughter who is 10 years old is already fairly clever at playing. She is an obviously somewhat talented girl in more than one direction. Olaf begins to have a fairly large family. He has now 8 children, who are all healthy and thriving. When we came back to Grand Forks we went in "Nordmandens" office for a while and had a chat with Kjetil Knudson. He told us that his parents, Knut Skotbakken and wife, lived on their own land far west in Dakota, where he himself as well as his brothers Hans and Helek each had a quarter of land. Knut has bad health. He suffers from bad constipation, which for such an old man is an extremely painful and troublesome sickness. He was attacked by it at home in Norway, and this illness was the main reason that Hans went home and brought them out here, as they obviously had little attention at home. It is bad to think that Knut is plagued in his old age by such a troublesome sickness. Hans worked his land and preached for the people out there, said Kjetil. I was glad to hear that he had not given up his preaching activity, even though he doesn't have an established living. Helek sometimes works as a carpenter.

People around here are very busy with threshing. It is a fairly bad year according to what they say. Hailstorms and too much heat are the causes, they say. We have also had it terribly hot the last week. Up to 98 degrees in the shade. It is unusually warm for September. Last Saturday the threshing machine had to stop work because of the heat. Today the weather seems to have changed considerably.

I am very glad that you will soon be able to move with Anne to Aslak's house. There is no reason for such an old man as you to keep on with your lonely struggle and cares. Remember that when you move in together you can be happy helping him.

I will not be doing any land transaction with Anne. She has put everything in Aslak's hands, which seen from her side is very reasonable. I didn't get to talk much to Aslak concerning it because we had a fairly short time together.

We are all well. The children can feel a little out of sorts now and then in such extreme heat as we have had but however we are fairly healthy.

With hearty greetings from your son Anders and family.

Translator's note: It is interesting to have another reference to the three boys Hans, Helek and Kjetil, who were hired boys for Olaf in 1891. Anders does not indicate which Anne it is who has but everything in Aslak's hands. However, it isn't likely to be the youngest sister, as she and their father are soon to share Aslak's home, and, as young Anne apparently never married, she would still be with her widowed father, and Anders would not need to write about her, to him. The older sister, Anne, who married Ole Ness, is perhaps the one mentioned. Previous letters have indicated that Ole was not a good provider. If they have taken up land, it may be that Ole is unable to care for it, and Anne feels it necessary to have someone else take over. Burial records show that she and her husband and son, Gunnuld, were all buried in Badger, Minnesota, where both Aslak and his parents had taken land. At the time of this letter Gunnuld would be 27, but he may have left home. I often wonder if these 'mystery gaps' in the family story will ever be filled. D.R.

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(P. 89) Olaf to Thora February 27, 1909

Mekinock, N.D.

Dear sister!

It is so long since, we heard from each other, that it is about time to break the silence, since it is obvious, that it is I, who owes a letter, although I can't remember, which of us last wrote. But that really doesn't matter, we must write when we "feel like it", whether we owe a letter or not.

I don't know whether we have informed you about, when our last boy made his entrance into this world. I got to thinking about it today, his birthday. Now he is one year, he Harald George, plump, pleasant, and good-natured he has been the whole time, really a sweet one, as the ladies usually say. I just lack one boy now, so that I would have just as many sons and daughters as Job. All are well and active, have good talents and learn easily. John is at Augsburg this winter. He likes it there and progresses as far as I understand.

Here at home we have 6, who go to school, namely Marius, Magnus, Marie, Alvhilde, Agnes and Hans, so we have only the two smallest at home Carl and Harald. Marius and Magnus are in the highest class (eighth grade), Marie in 7<sup>th</sup>, Alvhilde in 6<sup>th</sup> and Agnes in 4<sup>th</sup>. Hans began last autumn.

Magnus will perhaps study with the Pastor next summer. We are a little free-congregation here, with A. B. Dyre as the pastor. Pastor Dyre belongs to the Brothers Society, but our congregation doesn't belong to any society. For my personal choice, I am a free church man. We built a little church in the woods corner immediately west of Hans Ststad during the summer of 1906. We usually have a meeting there every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday.

How is father? Just think, he will soon be 80! I had not expected him to be so old. I wrote to him in March last year, but have heard nothing from anyone. Anne is of course with him? Do you know if he has received my letter? You and your man are both lovingly greeted from all of us here.

Your devoted brother,  
O. S. Houkom

Translator's note: Among the papers in my care is a copy, made by Mason Solem, of a greeting card given to the children at Blooming School District No. 55 Grand Forks County, North Dakota, at the end of the 1909 school year, by the teacher, Ruby A. Hultgren. As well as a six-verse poem, printed in English, the names of all the children are listed, including of course the six Houkom's named in Olav's letter.

For those of you who have to listen to the complaints of teachers about the size of their classes, I will just note the numbers in each grade of Ruby's eight-grade school. No other teachers are named, so the children were all under her care.

Grade	Number of Students
First	12
Second	8
Third	4
Fourth	6
Fifth	5
Sixth	5
Seventh	5
<u>Eighth</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	49

During my own first five years of teaching I usually had 49-51 students, but they were all 5 to 6 years old. I would not want to have 49 spread over 8 grades. We owe the pioneers more honor and gratitude than we sometimes admit. D.R.

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(P. 90) Olaf to Aslak      May 31, 1909                      Mekinock, N.D.

Dear Brother!

Enclosed you will find P. O. M. Order for \$13.78 namely for material \$12.45; for "livery team" \$3.33 (1/3 of \$10.00) in all \$15.78. From that I take \$2.00 which I should have for a full set of "ringwood" which you bought from me to repair the wheels of the old buggy you got together with the mare. I am taking the opportunity to remind you of it in all brotherliness, as you certainly have forgotten both the \$2.00 and the horse collar which you were to send back when convenient.

It cost me about \$6.00 to get the painting touched up again. The spots which flies or other insects had put on it had etched themselves into the painting, so that it was not possible to get them off, they had to be brushed over. But now it is fine. The artist Gulliksen who for the time being has his studio in Grand Forks took great pains with it. He has come from Skien and he was totally patriotically delighted when I told him a little about grandfather's public career.

We are all well.

With many greetings to Uncle Aslak from my family.

Your devoted brother           Olaf

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Olaf to Aslak    December 23, 1910           Mekinock, N.D.

Dear Brother!

Your welcome letter of the 12<sup>th</sup> ditto I have received. Thank you for it.

I am in complete agreement with you concerning the gravestones and shall take care of my share of the gravestone you have ordered.

Yesterday I went to Grand Forks and enquired both from Holand and Lee Bros. concerning photographs of grandfather's portrait. They both believed that they would be able to reproduce a fairly satisfactory photograph of the painting, and next time I go to Forks I shall take the picture with me to Lee Bros. who are more of "Art Photographers" than the others I know about.

My portrait from Gulliksen I received completely O.K. (sic) but have certainly quite neglected to write and thank you for the trouble, which you had with it. It is deplorable, that he has done such poor work for you with father's and mother's pictures. Once I talked with him he complained, that it was so difficult to bring out the natural expression on such small pictures. My picture is certainly not so bad, but there are however certain features, which are not completely as they should be, as for the ex. The nose, which is too curved, the hair too light, while it has a little too much golden gleam, and the total expression is, as when I am almost "blue". But for a quick glance the likeness is pronounced.

So you are thinking of taking a trip to Norway in the spring. Yes, who would not like to take such a trip, when one has time and means for it? But uncle, poor thing! Will he undertake the trouble again, when he is so old? I hope you will both visit me before you go.

We expect John home this evening. He was sick with nervous fever on Thanksgiving Day, stayed at the Dear Home for 3 weeks.

A happy Christmas and Good New Year is wished you from us all.  
Your br. Olaf.

Translator's note: Olaf himself uses the letters O. K. even while writing in Norwegian. Aslak did visit Norway in 1911. (See letter of 8/29 and 12/26/1934). "Uncle, poor thing" is probably Aslak Haugen, Svennung's youngest brother. He would be 72 at the time this letter was written. He emigrated in 1886. D.R.

(P. 91) Translator's note: In 1912 Olaf moved with some of his children to their new home near Fargo, North Dakota. His second wife, Anna, and the rest of the children stayed in Mekinock until the fall, presumably so that a crop could be cared for and harvested at the old place as well as at the new. D.R.

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Olaf to Aslak May 5, 1912 Fargo, N.D.

Dear Brother!

Now I have settled down enough after all the turmoil of moving and arranging both here and there, so that I can begin to answer various letters, which I have let lie unanswered for a long time. I began a letter to you the day before I began to move my things there at home, but as I didn't get it finished that day, it was never completed. It took much time to get ready the great "carload" which we brought here with us and it took more time than necessary to get here after "the car" was ready, so we came to Fargo Easter morning and had to stay there till Monday, without being able to come the 6 miles we had left to Osgood, a flag station 1 ½ miles from the farm. There was no "quiet week" for us, no festive Easter resting time with all gathered around the home's fireplace. We were scattered.

Here we are busy now, Marius, Alvilde and Carl with me here, Marie in Fargo, John was here just on his way through to Leeds, N.D. where he will hold a Norwegian school again this year. In the old home with mamma are also Magnus, Agnes, Hans, Harald, and Margaret.

I am thriving here very well, everything handy in all ways, and land of the best quality, but not so few weeds, which however are much decreased since the farmers began to harvest corn and potatoes. I shall probably not plant many potatoes this year, as I do not have many seed potatoes myself and they are so dear this year; but I shall plant much more corn, as it will be the chief animal fodder from now on.

Concerning the picture of Houkom which you wrote about, it seems as though we have to be afraid it has been lost. I let painter Gulliksen have it, as he had Anders' painting of Haukom under restoration. I met him in Fargo Easter Day, and then he said that he believes the photograph went with the painting back to Anders. I shall write to Anders immediately and shall then ask him about it.

Here there will be two grand Norwegian meetings in Fargo this summer. The United Church's Annual Meeting from the 6 - 13 June and the Norwegian Son Festival from the 12 - 14 July; which must be very grand. You will surely come to the Song Festival? It will at any rate be a good opportunity for you and Anders to visit me in my new home. You must arrange it so that you come here together for one of the meetings, anyway. You will be heartily welcome, but I am afraid that the entertainment will be fairly deficient, as my cook is both young and inexperienced. But I will make the most diligent use of the reunion's excuse-formula: You must be kind and put up with the poor lodging; so it will be all right.

When you come, you must bring with you the pictures of father and mother and get the painter to put them right while you are nearby. He would like to make them satisfactory. He has asked me to take mine in to him again, also, so that he can see, if there is any way he can improve it.

We are well in the family as far as I know. Greet relatives and friends and you yourself are heartily greeted from your brother Olaf.

P.S. I am sending you a copy of "Fram" where you will find a piece about Telelaget on Page 4 and about the song festival on the last page of the paper. My address is Route #1, Fargo, N.D.

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(P. 92) Postcard, undated  
Papa to Mamma

Dear Mamma!

We will probably not come before Saturday. It will be Ole Graff and me. Magnus must probably drive, as there has been no offer for more than \$100.00 for Prins, so I could not sell him.

It will be best if Marius borrows the grocery wagon from Furuberg, so we can bring the trunks with us at the same time. Loving greetings, Papa.

Translator's note: It seems that this postcard must have been written in the fall of 1912, when Olaf moved the rest of his family to the new farm near Fargo.

An interesting word, for those who like to know how immigrants blended their old language with their new, is "trunkene". The Norwegian word for "the trunks" would be "kistene", the root word kiste with the plural suffix. But Olaf has used the English word, trunki, and attached to it the plural -ene, which includes the article "the".

As there is space to spare on this page, it might be as well to list the names of Olaf's children, as listed in the family bible, a copy of which I received from Mason Solem. Thank you Mason.  
D.R.

Olaf and Marie Houkom's children

John Asbjørn, born January 27 1890  
Svenung Marius, April 24, 1891

Olaf and Anna Houkom's children

Joe Magnus, November 17, 1894  
Marie Tonette, April 16, 1896  
Alvhilde Margarete, December 20, 1897

Agnes Birgitte, October 9, 1899  
Hans Olaf, August 13, 1902  
Carl Ingeman, April 13, 1905  
Harald George, February 27, 1908  
Margarette Christine, September 11, 1911

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(P. 93) Fragment - page numbered 7 - Anders to ?? Possibly Aslak (pencil dated August 1915)

Printed heading - A. Houkom, Lutheran Pastor, Halstad, Minn \_\_\_\_\_ 191\_\_

----- writing and you will probably be here to get work. Magda is taking music lessons from a girl from Henrum. I am afraid she is not a very marvelous teacher, but there is no one better available here.

When Nellie was in Mpls. she met Mrs. Olaf who had come there to seek a doctor for her eyes. She has one of the worst eye diseases. She was already blind in the one eye and had almost lost the sight in the other, so the doctor would attempt a pair of operations, but as far as Nellie could understand the doctors had little hope. So it looks as if she will be totally blind, which is very tragic and difficult for her, who is still in her strongest years. Think what a trial it is for the whole family.

I see that H. B. is out again with a longer piece in "Skandinavian". They keep on and will probably get something done, you'll see. Perhaps it would be best to let our whole plan go and so in a more private way collect what we can for the museum. It looks so impossible when we have no opportunity to get together with any of our parishioners. Now tomorrow the conference begins in Forest City, Ia. Consequently, we will not be going there. I see nothing in the papers about the meeting in Mpls. which Trovatur talked about. Very likely nothing will come of it. But as you will.

With hearty greetings! Your brother Anders.

Translator's note: This is obviously part of a much longer letter. Possibly this sheet only was preserved because of the reference to "Mrs. Olaf" and her affliction. Is Nellie "Mrs. Anders"? Presumably Magda is his daughter. The pencilled date does not look like Anders writing. D.R.

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(P. 94) Olaf to Aslak April 16, 1916 Fargo, N.D.  
(Printed Heading)  
Olaf S. Houkom  
R. Route No. 1  
Fargo, N.D.

Dear Brother Aslak!

Thanks for the last! It is now over a month since I left Roseau Co. and it is therefore not too soon, that I send you a few words of thanks for good and enjoyable company. I got home easily the evening of the same day I left Greenbush, namely 14<sup>th</sup> March.

I had scarcely happened to write today, either, if I hadn't suddenly remembered that I promised to send you Uncle's (Mother's brother's D.R.) letter. I thought then that it was safer to do it immediately, otherwise it might have been forgotten again for a long time. It is a valuable letter for us relatives, especially, as I am in great doubt whether there is such a letter preserved after him, whether there can be found, anyway, anything of another kind of contents. This letter throws a light on the man's character and heartily and clearly, I think, over his religious standpoint and view of life. The one who writes thus, can not be a free thinker, it proclaims all too clearly a simple trust in God, who hears prayers, to be written by a doubter, also, even if his view of human life is infected by pessimism. You must not forget to send it back to me, I certainly don't want to lose it.

I would like to have a picture of Houkom, just as I saw someone had over there. It was actually Houkom with all the farm buildings, which are separate; but it would probably be indiscreet to ask for it, as I have received so many pictures before. We are all well except Anne, she is not well.

With friendly greetings from us all.  
Your brother Olaf.

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Unaddressed New Year Postcard  
Olaf to ??? no year date.

Dear brother and sister!

Herewith a loving greeting and wish for a good and blessed new year. We are all well with the exception of Anna, who is still completely blind and in the winter suffers greatly from rheumatism in shoulders, arms, and most in her fingers, so she is worse off than last year when she could knit a good many pairs of socks. Marius and Magnus are not yet called up for examination for war service but must soon hear. —  
Your brother Olaf.

Translator's note: Both Anne and Anna in these messages from Olaf must refer to his wife, usually known as Anna. The youngest of his sisters, often known as "Little Anne", lived with Aslak during their later years, so possible this card was sent to them. The United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917, so this is probably a greeting for New Year 1918.

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(p. 95) Mama to Alvhilde January 17, 1918 Fargo

Translator's note: This is written in pencil, in large, uneven letters sprawled over the paper - but is amazingly legible considering that the writer was blind. D.R.

Dear Alvhilde,

I shall send you a few words as Agnes is not home she went in to celebrate Masen's birthday that was yesterday. Magnus left last Monday for Forks and when he got there his papers had been left there in storage and they had never sent him any notice about it however it was his luck that he went there.

Mrs. Gard has lain sick in the hospital for a long time pap had a letter from Aunt Anna she says that Aslak is very sick sometimes I got your letter yesterday if I were in your place now I would eat the butter with a spoon when the old one turned her back on you, do what Magnus did; the less butter Kari put out the worse he ate.

Agnes exchanged the piece you gave her and got one with a butterfly design and so there is the round one she is working now on the bag which Masie gave her you must watch yourself now so you don't freeze if it is cold in the school so go with your overshoes on.

Agnes was at Furuberg's last Sunday evening and there were also teachers and Mrs. An-.

My hands are not so bad but there are two fingers which always are sore. I must stop now you certainly can't decipher this. Loving greeting from us all.

Your mama

Translator's note: Mason Solem will be pleased to find this reference to his first birthday. I have spelled him "Masen", just as his Grandma did. It is close to his usual signature these days: Mase. D.R.

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(P. 96) John to Marius December 20, 1932 (Written in English) Blanchardville, Wis.

Printed notepaper with a picture at the top, captioned "River Scene in Blanchardville" and underneath, "The Most Crooked River in the World". The letter is typed.

Dear Brother Marius, -

What's the matter, why can't you write a brother a word to announce to him your second

marriage? Joe was considerate enough to mail me a newspaper notice of the event, otherwise I suppose I would still be in blissful ignorance about your latest escapade. Well, it seems to be true, that no one falls faster than a widower. Anyway, whoever your new wife and helpmate in life is, I sincerely hope that your union may be happy, and that you shall be spared the sadness of an untimely severance of the tender bonds, which join husband and wife in true love and affectionate helpfulness of one another. So please accept my congratulations and best wishes for the future. In this I am joined by Agnes who also thought much of Zora, and who likewise think a lot of you.

Herewith I am sending you as my contribution to your Christmas happiness this year, instead of the usual box of cigars, a fruit of my labors this summer and fall. You will find within the covers hereof a collection of our father's "Amerika-Breve" and several very venerable PIONEER LETTERS written by relatives at Westby, Wis., and other places to our grandfather \* If you have not forgotten to read Norwegian, I am sure you will find them very interesting reading. You will also find included herewith a clipping from Minneapolis Tidende setting forth, what some others think of father's letters. \*\* Due to Mr. Qualley's visit here this summer, I set out, upon his urgent request, to transcribe all those old letters, so that the NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, of which both of us are members, might have a copy of them for their archives. Accordingly, I have had considerable work this last half year, in order to comply with his desires. The original copy, therefore, goes into the archives of the association at Northfield, Minn. I am sending you the second copy, while I keep the third copy for myself. In time all the originals should be deposited in the archives at Augsburg in Minneapolis. You surely deserve a first copy, dear brother, but it is quite a lot of work for one, who is not yet an expert typist. And by the way, Dr. T. C. Blegen has requested me to make a translation of some of the best of father's letters for publication in the STUDIES AND RECORDS published by the Historical Association. I may do that after Christmas.

Translator's notes: \* These are the letters that I translated in the first book, "They Came From Kviteseid" (Pages 21 - 50).

\*\* This undated clipping includes an article in Norwegian, two columns in length, headed – Pioneer Treasure

Carlton C. Qualey tells of his hunt for material for the History Society's Archives

One paragraph from the article is as follows:

The most valuable collection of letters Qualey has found belongs to Pastor John Houkom, Blanchardville, and are written by his father to Norway in the 1870's – and are therefore true "America Letters". They are really remarkably complete and detailed concerning the Journey to America, the trip from Quebec to La Cross, Wis., the first year's struggle in Fillmore and Houston Counties, Minnesota, and the Coon Prairie Area in Wisconsin. Copies are being made for the archives. D.R.

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(P. 97) John to Marius      December 20, 1932

In July this summer, I made a trip to Westby to see whether or not I could make contact with any of those folks mentioned in father's letters. And happily I succeeded most magnificently. First I met two of those German boys father mentions on page 24 in letter X., namely Franz and Ignatz

\* Wilhelm lives at West Concord, Minn. Both Franz and his wife are 81, and told me that pa had been in their wedding and had played the violin for them, playing church songs. When did we ever see pa playing a violin? I took a picture of them, also of the old log house in which the family lived at the time, certainly a magnificent log house, but now used as a blacksmith and tool shop. I also had a long talk with Ignatz, who as you will see from the enclosed newspaper clipping, died two weeks after I had seen him. Both of them were small, crooked-nosed, typical Germans. Then I was at the farms of Høie, Svennung and Thronð Overson Kjerkebø, all of whom are mentioned in pa's letters and there is a pioneer letter from Svennung to grandpa. These were all cousins of grandpa, their mother being Karen Houkom sister of Stortingsmand Ole Bjørnson Houkom \*\* Pa came to Høie's place. They went together, as he writes in his second letter, to Thronð i Høljedalen, which was Thronð Overson Kjerkebø. He was married to one of the Houkom family too, and mind you, I found his widow still living, 87 years old. She was as tickled as a little girl at seeing me. I had a long visit with her, which she appreciated immensely. But she passed away two weeks thereafter.

Then there is another family much interested in us. This is a brother and sister, Obert and Cora Rundahl, living a mile east of Coon Valley, right on Highway 11. I have passed that home from four to six times a year all these years. Their mother was a daughter of Høie Kjerkebø. And they are very "family conscious". They are both working with gathering all the material and information they can about the Houkom family. For them Aslak traced the Kjerkebø ancestry back to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, when he was in Norway a year ago. \*\*\* And of course they were tickled pink, when I came to see them. They have started a family reunion, having had two by this time. No doubt they will be arranging for another this next summer, and if I can possibly go, I will do so. Perhaps you could also come, and take Anders and Aslak with you in the car. It would be an interesting trip for you all. And the Coon Valley country is exceedingly picturesque and beautiful in summer. About 50 miles north of La Crosse is also a large colony of our relationship, which would no doubt be represented. I might look them up next summer.

Translator's notes: \* The German family is referred to twice in Olaf's letters, on pages 36 and 39 of the first book, "They Came from Kviteseid".

\*\* The Kjerkebø family were not strictly accurate in their details of their relationship to the Houkom family. The oldest Kjerkebø immigrants were Ouver and his wife, Karen, whose birth name was Knutsdatter, or the daughter of Knut. Therefore she was not the sister of Ole Bjørnsen Houkom, whose father was of course, named Bjørn, and his two step-fathers were Torgjus and Anders. However, Ole Bjørnsen's second and third wives, Egelev and Torgjerd, were sisters of Ouver; so the relationship is through Ouver, not through his wife Karen.

\*\*\* In a letter dated July 19, 1933, Aslak denies having traced their ancestry thus. He merely told them that the Kirkebø (Kjerkebø) farm was mentioned in a church record of 1398. He ridicules all their claims to historical family records. See the next letter in this collection (Page 100) He also mentions that Sveinung Ooversen married Tone Houkom; so if John visited Trond's widow, he saw Tone Juve, not Tony Houkom, who died early enough for Sveinung to marry again and have seven children by his second wife. D.R.

(P. 98) This is enough now of this family stuff. I can say we are all quite well, but for the fact that we have all just gone thru a severe attack of colds, but are recovering. Hard times are felt also here, of course, and I do not know how much of my salary I will be able to get at the final settlement at the close of the current year. But we have been far from needy or suffering. I suppose we are at that much better situated than many other localities. But there is just about as much complaining for all that. But now that we have been promised beer by Christmas, I suppose all will be happy and rich.

We have also had much more of winter so far this year, than the last two previous. Last night was 18 below. Of course, that is nothing compared with what you have had, I am sure. But that is cold here, believe it or not.

Finally, I wish to convey to you both our wishes for a very happy Christmas season.

Let us have a letter at your earliest opportunity. I always appreciate letters from you.

Fondly, your brother, John.

P.S. I just sent check for \$2 to Olaf Bang's son today, for taking care of our mother's grave.

Translator's note: In Anna's first letter to Thora she mentions working for Ole Bang. I am trying in various ways to ascertain whether there was ever a small community with a post office, named Granville, in the area between Oslo, Minnesota and Mekinock, North Dakota. So far I have had no luck.

I have copies of letters from John to Marius, written in 1940 and 1946, but they are mainly concerned with requests for help with plans to remodel churches, as Marius was an architect. They have no bearing on the family history, so I have decided not to include them. However, I have notes made by John about Svennung Ouverson Kjerkebøn, and attached to them machine-made copies of what are either fragments of paper or postcards, undated, but probably from the 1850's. As I did not have them when I began this translation I will include them here, after John's notes. Bear in mind that he is mistaken about the family name of Karen, wife of Ouver. She was not a Houkom. D.R.

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## SVENNUNG OOVERSON KJERKEBØ

The pioneer writer of the accompanying letters (pages 3-6 in this book) from Coon Prairie in the years 1856 and 1866, arrived on Coon Prairie, Wisconsin in 1851 with his wife, Thone, nee Houkom, and their two sons, Ole and Ouver. In the same company were also his parents, Ouver Aslaksen Kjerkebø and wife, Karen, nee Bjørnsen (Houkom), and his brothers and sister, Trond, Ingebjør, John, Saave, and Ouver. Another of Svennung's brothers, Høie, three years younger, emigrated with relatives at the age of 15, coming to Koshkonong. In 1849 he and a companion walked to Prairie du Chien, from where they took boat to La Crosse, coming soon after to Coon Prairie where they settled. These men were all long-lived. Svennung reached the age of 88; Høie 94, Trond 95, John 82.

As to the two names by which the family has been known: Ouverson - is naturally derived from their father, the aforementioned Ouver Aslaksen Kjerkebøn. Later this was changed to Oberson, the surname by which the descendants on Coon Prairie are now known.

Kjerkebøn - has a long history. It has been used variously, and is derived from the farm in Norway whence the family came. Its meaning is, "the farm belonging to the church". A certain Bishop Øistein records in Norway in 1398 this farm as one belonging to the Church, having given by a certain Andres Arneson.

(P. 99) "Kjerke" or "Kjørkje" are both Norwegian provincialisms for the Danish "kirke", which is "church". The ending "bø" or "bøn" is likewise provincial for "a farm, a place".

These letters were written to the grandfather of the undersigned, Svennung Olsen Houkom at Kviteseid, Telemarken, Norway. Upon his arrival at long last in America in 1888, these letters came with him. Upon his arrival at 1909, my father, the Rev. Olaf S. Houkom, came into possession of them. When he passed away in 1920, the undersigned received them.

Letter #1 was sent without an envelope and stamp. Simply folded and sealed with sealing wax. It was received at Springville, Bad Ax Co. Wis., on Dec 19. Otherwise there are marks from rubber stamps made at four different places, evidently in Norway, the last having been made at Svinesund on February 5, 1857.

Translator's note: Although he mentions "the undersigned", John has not signed these papers.

The following are translations of the two fragments, or postcards:

1 Acre is 100 and 60 squares and the measuring stick is 16 feet and 6 inches English measurement take away ½ inch from Norway value if you want to reckon out how many Norwegian measures there are in 1 Acre. So there are 100. 60 Acres in a quarter. So you can see how many Norwegian measures there are in a quarter of land for I have one quarter if you want to reckon it out and inform me back. G. Gundersen

(A letter from Gunlek Gundersen Dalen, dated May 21, 1870, is on page 22 of the first book. The translation below is possibly from the back side of the same fragment, as the one above. D.R.)

Ole and Bergit Klevastul I know little about they are in Iowa there where Thor is but I believe all is well. There is 300 miles in between and so I don't know much about them at present.

(Machine copies of an envelope show various dates in 1870. From another source I am informed that 160 acres equals 600 Norwegian mål, or units of land measurement. I am not sure whether this fact helps or hinders G. Gundersen's mathematical explanation. D.R.)

Dear Brother Anders: –

I received your letter yesterday. Thanks. I have much to do; but here it is continually hot (84 deg.) And I must come in and cool off. And so at the same time I can scribble down a few words as the beginning of the answer.

With the clippings from “Reform” and “Scand.” you remind me of Obert Rundahl’s misleading account of the Kirkebø family. It is a shame that we were not able to talk about this last year, when you were here. You suggest that I should contact Mr. Rundahl or Mrs. Hilda Berg to correct R.’s Presentation. It can scarcely be done that way. You will certainly agree with me on that, when you learn, that I have already a couple of years ago exchanged letters with R. and that the information I gave him led to a colossal wrong beginning of his family history.

He was referred to me by Olaf A. Houkom, Deronda, Wisconsin, and so I received a letter from him, that he wanted information on the Kirkebø family. I answered him, that I had not arranged my notes from Norway, but that later I could give him some information. But as he seemed so interested I thought I could please him by saying that the Kyrkjebø name was very old. And I mentioned then, that in Bishop Eistein’s rent rolls of 1398 Kyrkjebø was entered as church property belonging to Holda church. So what happened? Yes, some time after in “Reform” 13<sup>th</sup> Aug. ‘31 we get a complete mess about the Kyrkjebø - family: “Kjørkjebø - People have lived on their family estate there in Telemark ever since 1398 and until the last proprietor Ouver Aslakson Kjørkjebø in 1851 emigrated to America.” How can he thus make out, that this particular family has lived on the farm since 1398? He must be so naive, that he thinks a farm gets its name from the man who lives there, while the opposite is the case: the man gets his family name from the farm.

Ouver the last proprietor of Kirkebø? What about Sveinung Kirkebø and Aslak Gadeholt then? Then had the farm as an inheritance and property for many years, first Sveinung and then Aslak. However, there is a questions as to whether Ouver really was the owner of Kirkebø. He probably was, but in 1848 when his twin sons were confirmed he lived at Kirkegroven. And so he says, that Kviteseid and Holt Seminary are the same! But something even worse is, that there are not more than two left of the Kirkebø family: a rector in Skien and another teacher. Why doesn’t he name names? He doesn’t seem to know anything about any others of Aslak Kirkebø’s children than Ouver who came to America with his family. I shall in haste just name a few. There we have as well as Sveinung who remained on the farm, two daughters, Egelev and Tarjer, married to our grandfather O. Bjørnsen, and from them the big families on Gadeholt, Midsund and Gjersund. So also we have a daughter of Aslak K. who married to Haukom in Høidalsmo, one married to Bjørnstad in Fyrasdalen. In all these examples there are children, grandchildren and grandchildren’s children. There are hundreds of direct descendants of Aslak Kyrkjebø. Also that about Ouver being married to a sister of O.B. (Grandfather). That also is nonsense, Kviteseid’s church book shows, that Ouver was married to Karen Knutsdatter Gjervold.

But when he mentions that Sveinung, Ouver’s son was married to Tone Houkom, he says nothing about her being daughter of O.B. She was of course full sister of Aslak Gadeholt. In his first article he says, that he “has heard” that they are related to Steenerson, but in this last

“Reform” he says “they are related to him”. That is also nonsense. Stener Knutson came from Meras in Siljor and is not related to the Kirkebø family, thank God.

There is much more that is erroneous in his articles, but I can not take time for more writing now. I have long since written to Sveinung Gotuholt for more information, I need to nail together one thing and another in this matter. When I get it, my intention is to refute his many errors. Not happy work, but I consider it my duty.

With best greetings, your brother, Aslak.

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(P. 101) Statement by Aslak January 3, 1934

THE SILVER BROOCH (sent herewith) was bought by my sister Tone in Norway from the silver-smith who made it.

Sister Tone was born July 30, 1859. She came to this country in 1886 and at once started as housekeeper for our brother Rev. Olaf S. Houkom, Manvel, N. Dak.

Tone was secretly engaged to be married to a young man who had emigrated to this country about a year previously. But she became a victim of typhoid fever and died at brother Olaf's temporary home (about half-way between Manvel and Mekinock) March 23, 1888. - Tone never wore the brooch so far as I know, and I think she planned on wearing it for the first time on her wedding day - a plan frustrated by her early death.

Brother Olaf was to be married that same year, to Miss Marie Glerum, so the brooch was given to her and she wore it on her wedding day - Thanksgiving Day 1888. Their married life did not last long. She also contracted typhoid fever and died the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1891. She was buried the 4<sup>th</sup>. Two infant boys, John and Marius, were left motherless.

My sister Thora who lived in Minneapolis, being prevailed upon, came to nurse and take care of the boys, and she then received the brooch from our brother Olaf.

After Thora's death - as Mrs. Meyer - in 1925, and her husband's death in 1926 there was an auction sale in 1927. There I bought it - almost hidden among other small articles in a paper box.

And - now I am giving this same little brooch to my little grand-niece Zora Ellen Houkom, hoping that she some day will appreciate it as a souvenir from her old relatives. Its intrinsic value is small, so it is easily parted with on that score, but it has belonged to sister Tone - one of my dearest relatives, and I know she has cherished it in happy anticipation. Since then it has passed through the hands of many good relatives.

Badger, Minn. January 3, 1934.

Aslak S. Houkom

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(P. 102) Aslak to John      August 29, 1934 and December 26, 1934    Badger, Minn

Dear Nephew John:

Many thanks for the letter. It was such fun to hear from you, that all has gone so well at the beginning in the new place. Here I have been suffering from a guilty conscience, because I haven't written to you for a long time. You have occasionally sent me interesting things, f.ex memories from your childhood home at Mekinock. It was interesting and well written. There was one mistake. You call Aasland "Torbjørn". His name is "Tosten". It was Fivland who was called Torbjørn. Also there was something about Skrefsrud's pipe. While Skrefarud was there they decided to try each other's pipes. Your father's pipe was a "brier" and worth more than Skrefsrud's "corncob". While they smoked your father said to S.: "You can exchange pipes with me, you?" And S. answered that he could do that. That implies, that your father valued the pipe as a memory of his friend Skrefsrud, and that S. understood that and willingly let him keep it. I mention this, in case you should decide to let these "reminiscences" be reprinted.

The reason why my letter-writing has become so terribly bad in recent years is that my time is so chopped up by daily duties and toil. But what use is it to mention this, when even my nearest neighbors don't understand. But the fact is, that my time is so chopped up by "chores", woodcutting, meal preparation, clothes washing, floor mopping, repairs, etc., so, when it becomes much to tiresome, I pick up a book or a newspaper, and then forget the tiresome details, and have a little peace. To read - consume - is possible in such a mood, but to write - produce - doesn't do so well. However it seems to me that many things are turned inside-out now. Politics and government (local and national) are not worth mentioning; for a thousand years' experience both in social and moral areas is thrown out of the door. Life-nourishing truth is stifled, but lies are served up from the press and the pulpit as remedies for the faults of times. This has been going on for many years, and becomes worse and worse. Sometimes I have thought: no, I must write about this to this or that newspaper. But it doesn't take long before I answer myself: "How would it help?" or: "What's the use?" And that's that. Actually the case is: the majority likes and prefers lies rather than truth both in moral and social areas. The faithless householder receives the praise: "The children of the world are wiser than the children of light in their generation". History repeats itself. It is the old battle. The battle between spirit and materialism. On the one side you can see God's love and ways and will follow them; on the other side the many and smart who think, that they with their smartness and great unions, organizations, can handle the problems without God and his love. Their first attempt in this direction was the building of the Tower of Babel, the sign of union.

The tragedy is that one often sees, that the few who would like to follow God's law let themselves be led astray to follow the example of the crowd: they place their confidence in organizations and the strength of numbers. The misfortune with the situation here in America, I think, is the land's greatness in so many aspects. Small states, small communities with small and transparent circumstances let themselves be governed democratically, the large are poisoned by democracy itself, so it declares itself bankrupt and goes over to despotism. We are speeding in that direction. We are already far along the road. If America has the power to turn back, to turn

before it is too late?

We lack great men. Theodore Roosevelt was a great statesman. I read in his biography that when he had to handle a complicated problem, he set himself first of all to figure out: whether it was morally and principally RIGHT. If it was, it received his approbation, if the opposite, it was necessary to fight it. Our current Roosevelt is, I think, a “cobbler”. He puts new patches on old clothes, so the hole gets bigger.

(P. 103) Now it is Dec 26, 8:15 pm. It is certainly not a good time to begin the ending of a letter which I began the 29<sup>th</sup> August. But now I must try to put together an ending and send it on its way tomorrow.

You want to know how it is going with the book about grandfather, O. Bjørnsen. Unfortunately it goes slowly. A complete explanation of this matter I cannot begin to give you. I don't have time. This affair has cost me a great deal of money.

In 1911 we were asked by writer Richard Berg for help with information and financial support for the publishing of a biography of O.B. - I was lucky enough to have a large number of letters, Storting-reports, lectures, among other things, which I lent to R. Berge. At that time we were four of O.B.'s descendants, who promised financial support for the publication. It was Uncle A. O. Houkom, Jørn Raamunddal, brother Anders, and I.

I then became the one with whom Berge conferred concerning the book both personally in 1911 and since through exchange of letters. In 1911 I was in Oslo for two weeks and took notes in the University library of things concerning O.B. especially his efforts in the Storting. Also I stayed two weeks in Skien and took notes from some letters. The same also in Kviteseid. - R. Berge had obtained some information himself there at home. Other than this, together with a little which Uncle A. O. H. gathered personally, I have assembled all the material. Jørn and brother Anders have obtained none.

In 1915 R.B. had finished the book. The war was raging at that time, so the matter was postponed. Meanwhile it went thus with the “financial supporters”: Uncle A.O.H. opposed us at the beginning, because R.B. would only write it in dialect. He therefore refused to have anything to do with it. Jørn R. went bankrupt and was therefore out of it. Brother Anders found so much to complain about. First it was that he thought R. Berge could risk publication without our help. Later he grumbled that our relative Olaf. A. Houkom, Deronda, Wis. should avoid having to help. And then there was brother Olaf (your father) who he thought must have better means to be involved than he had himself. These objections he brought up again and again until I became weary of it and left him alone. The matter is this: he is rather self-sufficient and niggardly. I could have kept quiet about this, but why should I? Once I have mentioned a matter or a person, it can also be a duty to say something complimentary so that others can see the affair in the right light.

So the manuscript had lain complete since 1915 and nothing had been done with it. In 1926 my friend Mr. Wurschmidt made a trip to Norway, and I persuaded him to go to R. Berge and take with him some manuscripts about which I at the same time wrote to R.B. This business cost me

between 3 and 4 hundred kroner. The idea was at first to get them published here in this country. But I realized immediately that it would be a very difficult and tedious job to get them published here. For one thing they were not clearly written and had many crossings out and corrections, so I would have had to rewrite them. Also there were many episodes and items which I thought should be added. So in 1927 (that was the year that you were on a visit) I decided to travel to Norway to put an end to this lamentable affair. I had a promise from John Listaul to take care of the cows and my little team. John is such an extra reliable man. But I had to find a place for Anne somewhere else. I wrote to brother Anders to see if he would take care of Anne while I was away. I could get John to be here for a year or more if I wanted. From Anders I got the reply that he certainly could not take Anne. He suggested that I should ask Tone Anderson or Mrs. Gustofson (nee Mary Ness) to take her. I knew better than to ask them to do it. That's the way it is. "Let George do it".

So of course I had to give up my trip to Norway in 1927. But in 1930 it could be. But unfortunately I could not arrange it otherwise than that I must be back within three months. For one thing, the fare there and back was much cheaper within that time frame, and for the other, Anne could not be here alone when winter came.

(P. 104) This limited time meant that I was scarcely able to do a quarter of the material collecting I needed to realize the plan I had had for the part of the book I had thought to edit and publish along with the biography.

First there are many letters, which I think should be included. For example from pastor and poet Jens Zetlitz, M.E. Landstad, P. Mandt, Ole Blom, Tormod Knutsen and many other well-known men. I have these letters in the original. Also I have in the original many of his Stortings - accounts and several lectures he gave on important subjects known throughout the country, for example on the abolishing of the nobility, on the abolishing of the parliament-bill of 1741, on restoration of the rights of farmers, on the Jewish question, on defense-duty, etc.

In Kviteseid I began to write about the family from the church books, our relatives and others. I thought that information about the family within the parish would be of great interest to many. Concerning our family, I was unfortunately unable to gather even half. Mother came from Lunde parish, and her father and mother came from Hella parish. I did not have time to visit these two parishes. And then there is another thing: the older church books are preserved in an archive in Oslo. So one has to go there to find out about the oldest records.

Yes - the most valuable thing I was able to accomplish on my last trip to Norway was, that I got the biography printed with the additions which I thought were especially needed. Rikard Berge read the proofs and took care that everything was right and properly done. The printing cost me 500 kroner. And so I still have here a little over 400 copies unbound.

It is expensive to travel in Norway now. The hotels were very dear. I took the cheapest that had decent service. A room cost one, two, or up to six kroner. A krone is about 24 cents. Dinner two or three kroner, breakfast two kroner.

When I traveled from Oslo and up to Telemark I took 300 kroner out of the bank (and I had some

already) and I thought I should manage for quite a long while. But it wasn't long before I had to get 500 kroner more.

The tickets - there and back - Badger to Oslo cost me \$296.00.

There is much much more, I should write about, but this must be all for this time. It would be fun to take a trip to the coast. But that I must not even think about.

Three days after I got your letter I had the chance of a free ride to Seattle, but unfortunately, I could not get away.

So I will wish you health and happiness in the new place and in the new year.

Your uncle.

---

(P. 105) Aslak to John      August 29, 1934

Enclosure with previous letter.

Answer from A. S. Houkom, Badger, Minn., to nephew Rev. J. A. Houkom, Seattle, Wash. concerning a question about possible relationship to Miss Julia Houkom, Seattle.

Julia's father was, apparently, John Halvorson, Blair, Wis. – If I had known who her grandfather was, I could have answered more surely. But I assume, that she is descended from Sveinung Halvorson Houkom, who in 1870 emigrated to America with a large family and settled down there in Wis. This Sveinung is possibly Miss Julia's grandfather or great-grandfather.

There are three Houkom-farms: North Houkom, (Noristogu), South Houkom (Suistogu), and Lower Houkom (Hougen).

Sveinung Olson (father) lived at South Houkom till 1887, when he and mother came to your father, Pastor Olaf S. Houkom.

Aslak Olson (uncle) lived at Lower Houkom (Hougen) till 1886, when he with his family emigrated to Am. (Coon Valley, Wis.).

At the farm Hestehaga in Øy fjell, Telemark, in the last half of the 1700's lived Bjørn Olson. His son, Ole Bjørnson, bought South Houkom and lived there till his death in 1845.

Bjørn's daughter, that is O.B.'s sister, Gunhild, was married to Johans Guttormson Skare in Morgedal. Johan's and Gunhild's daughter, Tone, was married to Sveinung Halvorson of North Houkom on July 10, 1838.

You see, therefore, that your grandfather (Sveinung Suistogu Houkom) was a cousin of Tone, (Sveinung Noristogu's wife).

Sveinung and Tone had several sons and daughters. Among them: Halvor, Johans, and Gunder. One of these is possibly Miss Julia's grandfather or great grandfather. If we begin with Bjørn Olson Hestehaga as the common ancestor the generations branches are thus:

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Bjørn Olson Hestehaga | 1. Bjørn Olson Hestehaga  |
| 2. Ole Bjørnsen Houkom   | 2. Gunhild Skare          |
| 3. Sveinung Olson Houkom | 3. Tone Noristogu Houkom  |
| 4. Rev. Olaf S. Houkom   | Halvor, Johans and Gunder |
| 5. Rev. John A. Houkom   |                           |

That will therefore show that you are in the fifth generation with B. O. Hestehaga as the first. Doubtless Mrs. John Halvorson Houkom will be able to fill out the fifth generation in the branch which begins with Gunhild Skare.

NB: Øifjell was annex to Laurdal's parish. Now it belongs to Rauland. To Kviteseid parish belong the annexes Vraadal and Brunkeberg. And Brunkeberg consists of three suburbs or districts namely: Dalann, Morgedal, Ordal and Aasgrenni.

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(P. 106) Anders to Aslak and Anne    December 22, 1934    (No heading - date on envelope)

Dear siblings Aslak and Anne!

So Christmas is at the door again; for the 73<sup>rd</sup> time in my life; and almost the same number of visits with you. It is almost unbelievable. At any rate I have never thought that I should experience so many Christmas celebrations. How amazing human life is, however! In the past few days I have thought "back over" the many Christmas festivities we celebrated together in father's and mother's house, up till 1870, when Olaf left home; then Anne was about 3 ½ years old, Aslak 5 ½ years, and I 8 ½. Christmas 1869 was certainly the last time we 8 brothers and sisters were all together for the Christmas celebration. However one of the things that still seems amazing to me, is that in spite of our large flock of children, we all received new clothes and plenty of extra good food and besides that an overabundance of happiness and contentment. Now we are old and have only ourselves to care for, and yet, regarding the necessities of life, it is certainly only pretty fair, as far as that goes. At least it is that way for me. I'm not complaining; but I think it is so incomprehensible and rather sad. —

When we were children in father's and mother's home there were opportunities to visit friends and relatives at Christmas. Two or three times I went for Christmas visits to Flaabygd: to Christmas parties at Gjersund as well as the many visits to relatives in the home parish. But now ---- no social joys. It is strange. So we must enjoy our memories of Christmas together with father and mother and the family in former times and rejoice in the hope of celebrations with

them in the next world. ----

We are healthy and live well, but are missing the company of relatives and friends.

How goes it with your health? Let me hear from you. You are wished the quiet happiness and peace of Christmas. From your brother, Anders.

---

(P. 107) Alvhilda (Bidida) to Helen Forbes 1975 or 1976 (Written in English) No heading or date.

Hi Helen - !

My Mother, your Grandma and Kenny's Great Grandmother, Anna Dallum was born in Ishpeming, Mich. August 30 - 1874 - and her parents were Joe Dallum (Dahlum) and Margrette Moe ". They came from Trondheim, Norway in the year 1874 but settled for a short while in Michigan - there your Great Grandma was born. They stayed there about 3 years - to earn enough money to buy a covered wagon, a team of horses and a cow - the cow was very necessary because of the children especially - but a lot of good milk foods were made because there was always fresh milk.

Great Grandfather knew where they were going to settle. A large river up north was their destination, which was the Red and the place was Oslo, Minn. Uncle John - Great Grandma's oldest brother was 11 years old when they were traveling in the covered wagon and it was his job to look after the cow, so she would be fed and watered and also milked.

They settled near Oslo, Minn in 1877. On the way your Great Grandma (Kenny's GG Grandma) had a baby - Lars - and they told how kind everyone on the wagon train was to give help to them.

They built a log cabin and G. grandma grew up in Minnesota, a real pioneer. One of their horses died so for quite a while they farmed with one horse and one cow - She told how hard everyone worked - they had to clear the land, which was such hard work - But it was worth it, because the soil was so wonderful for farming.

One incident she told about was when they were sitting at the table eating one day - a big bear came running and jumped thru the window - onto their table and frightened everyone, but old bear got scared too, so he ran across the room and jumped out the other window. There was a lot of wild game for eating which they enjoyed very much.

Great Grandpa was the pastor in the Oslo area, but he lived near Mekinock. So that is where they met - at Oslo - She attended G. Forks College for a while (can't remember how long) - and on November 28 - 1891 she and Grandpa were married.

They lived on the farm near Mekinock until 1912 - when they moved to Fargo - Great Grandma - became very sick - and in 1916 she became blind. It was very sad. After a while, when she was used to blindness she did so much work.

She could crochet rugs and knit stockings and mittens for all her grandchildren. She had eight children all born when she lived near Mekinock - Carl, your grandpa, was the one that really loved to farm so he stayed on at the home place and continued farming.

She moved to Twin Valley to live with her youngest daughter about 1940 (I'm not sure) where she died in July 1958. She had been blind exactly half of her lifetime. She loved music, enjoyed singing.

Just thought this would be of interest to you - There were so many incidents one could tell but these are the ones I thought of.

(No signature)

Note by D.R.: Although this letter is addressed to Helen, the information was intended for Helen's son, Kenny, whose 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class was compiling a book about their ancestors. (I was their teacher). But this is the reason for Bidda's mixed references to her mother and others as grandparents or great grandparents. During one discussion, Helen was not sure that this information belongs in a book entitled "They Came from Kviteseid", but as Anna married a Kviteseid emigrant, and the information is of interest to their descendants, I am enclosing it. Dordi Round.

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THEY CAME FROM KVITSEID, Book II  
Appendix

(P.A1) Index to WRITERS OF LETTERS used in “They Came From Kviteseid”

SVEINUNG OLSEN HOUKOM,

born on April 3, 1829 in Kviteseid, Telemark, son of Ole Bjørnsen Houkom, and Tarjer Aslaksdatter Kirkebø. Confirmed June 22, 1845. Married November 5, 1849 to Mari Hansdatter Salteveje. Emigrated to America 1887. Mari died June 19, 1896. Svennung died May 8, 1909. Both buried in Rosendal Cemetery, Badger, Minnesota.

Letters Written On	To	From	On Page numbered
August 13, 1886	his children	Hvideseid	33, Book II
October 12, 1886	Aslak	Hvideseid	37, Book II
February 14, 1887	Aslak	Hvideseid	46, Book II
December 12, 1887	Aslak	Grand Forks Co.	55, Book II
February 10, 1888	Aslak	Manvel	57, Book II
August 7, 1888	son	Mekinock	62, Book II
October 13, 1889	Aslak	Mekinock	66, Book II
March 13, 1891	Aslak	Mekinock	70, Book II
July 14, 1891	Aslak	Mekinock	74, Book II
July 21, 1891	Aslak	Mekinock	75, Book II

(P. A2) OLAF SVEINUNGSSEN HOUKOM

born on May 31, 1850, in Kviteseid, Telemark, son of Sveinung Olsen Houkom and Mari Hansdatter Salteveje. Baptized July 14, 1850. Confirmed October 2, 1864. Married (1) October 3, 1888 to Anne Marie Glerum, who died July 1, 1891. Married (2) November 28, 1893 to Anna Dahlum. Emigrated to America 1870. Olaf died November 6, 1920; buried in Fargo. Anna died July, 1958; buried in Twin Valley, Minn.

Letters written on	To	From	On Page Numbered
June 5, 1870	Father	Ship 'Rjukan'	26, Book I
July 24, 1870	Father	Coon Prairie	26, Book I
January 9, 1871	Parents	Highlands Prairie	28, Book I
March 30, 1871	Father	Ness	29, Book I
November 26, 1871	Father	Highland Prairie	31, Book I
undated	Brother	no address given	33, Book I
June 22, 1872	Father	La Crescent	33, Book I
July 19, 1873	Father	Leon, Wis.	35, Book I
November 6, 1874	Father	La Crosse	37, Book I
October 25, 1875	Tarjer	La Crosse	10, Book II
April 11, 1876	Father	La Crosse	38, Book I
January 15, 1877	Tarjer	Augsburg	12, Book II
February 19, 1877	Tarjer	Augsburg	14, Book II
February 8, 1880	Father	Augsburg	41, Book I
May 1, 1880	(Diary Fragment)		17, Book II
May 24, 1880	Tarjer	Wilmar	18, Book II
November 29, 1880	Father	Kristiania	43, Book I
March 4, 1881	Father	Kristiania	43, Book I
March 17, 1881	Father	Kristiania	44, Book I
April 8, 1881	Father	Kristiania	45, Book I
June 28, 1881	Tarjer	Liverpool	19, Book II
April 26, 1883	Thone	Augsburg	45, Book I
August 1, 1883	Tarjer (Thora)	Dalton	24, Book II

August 26, 1884	Tarjer	Manvel	25, Book II
February 1, 1886	Thora	Manvel	27, Book II
December 30, 1886	Thora	Northwood	43, Book II
June 20, 1887	Aslak	Manvel	53, Book II
December 16, 1887	Thora	Manvel	56, Book II
March 22, 1888	Brother	Manvel	59, Book II
January 4, 1906	Aslak	Mekinock	86, Book II
March 29, 1906	Thora	Mekinock	87, Book II
February 27, 1909	Thora	Mekinock	89, Book II
May 31, 1909	Aslak	Mekinock	90, Book II
December 23, 1910	Aslak	Mekinock	90, Book II
May 5, 1912	Aslak	Fargo	91, Book II
(Postcard) 1912	Mama		92, Book II
April 16, 1916	Aslak	Fargo	94, Book II
New Year Card (1918?)	Aslak & Anne	Fargo	94, Book II

(P. A3) TARJER (THORA) SVEINUNGSDATTER HOUKOM

born September 16, 1856, in Kviteseid, daughter of Sveinung Olsen Houkom and Mari Hansdatter Salteve. Emigrated 1879. Married Mr. Meyer (sometime after 1893). Died June 7, 1925, buried in Badger, Minn.

Letter written on	To	From	On Page numbered
August 18, 1879	Parents	Merchants Hotel	15, Book II

TONE SVEINUNGSDATTER HOUKOM

born July 30, 1859 in Kviteseid, Daughter of Sveinung Olsen Houkom and Mari Hansdatter Salteve. Emigrated 1886. Engaged to Thor Johansson Klevstul. Died March 23, 1888, buried in Manvel, North Dakota.

Letters written on	To	From	On Page numbered
February 24, 1883	Tarjer	Midsund (Norway)	23, Book II
October 20, 1886	Anne	Manvel	40, Book II

ANDERS SVEINUNGSEN HOUKOM

born August 17, 1861, in Kviteseid, son of Sveinung Olsen Houkom and Mari Hansdatter Salteveje. Emigrated 1881. Died June 4, 1938.

Letters written on	To	From	On Page numbered
(undated fragment)	(Aslak?)	(Unknown)	1, Book II
June 28, 1881	Parents	Liverpool	20, Book II
December 18, 1881	Aslak	Wilmar	21, Book II
August 24, 1886	Aslak	Manvel	34, Book II
March 22, 1887	Aslak	Hillsboro	48, Book II
April 16, 1887	Aslak	Hillsboro	51, Book II
May 12, 1887	Aslak	Augsburg Seminary	51, Book II
May 31, 1887	Aslak	Glasgow	51, Book II
June 16, 1887	Aslak	Haukom, Kviteseid	52, Book II
November 12, 1887	Aslak	Manvel	54, Book II
April 20, 1888	Aslak	Hillsboro	60, Book II
April 27, 1888	Aslak	Hillsboro	61, Book II
May 19, 1891	Anne	Mekinock	72, Book II
September 10, 1906	Father	Portland, N.D.	88, Book II
August 1915	(unknown)	Halstead, Minn.	93, Book II
December 23, 1934	Aslak and Anne	(unknown)	106, Book II

(P. A4) ASLAK SVEINUNGSEN HOUKOM

born May 4, 1864 in Kviteseid, son of Sveinung Olsen Houkom and Mari Hansdatter Saltevej. Emigrated 1886. Died October 16, 1939, Badger, Minnesota.

Letters Written on	To	From	On Page numbered
June 23, 1886	Parents	Liverpool	28, Book II
July 3, 1886	Parents	Ship 'Adriatic'	29, Book II
July 10, 1886	Parents	Lie	30, Book II
August 3, 1886 *	Parents	Audubon	32, Book II
September 5, 1886	Parents	Audubon	35, Book II
November 21, 1886	Parents	Onland, Minn	42, Book II
February 2, 1887	Parents	Manvel	44, Book II
April 15, 1887	Father	Manvel	49, Book II
November 12, 1890	Thora	Mekinock	69, Book II
May 6, 1892	Thora	Hatton, N.D.	76, Book II
July 19, 1933	Anders	Badger, Minnesota	100, Book II
January 3, 1934	(Re Silver Brooch)	Badger, Minnesota	101, Book II
August 29, 1934	John	Badger, Minnesota	102, Book II
August 29, 1934	John (re Julia)	Badger, Minnesota	105, Book II

\*The fourth letter on this list is dated July 3, 1886; but as it tells of sequels to the events described in the previous letter, of July 10, Aslak must have written July when it was actually August. I have therefore listed it as August, to preserve the historical sequence. D.R.

JOHN ASBJØRN HOUKOM

born January 27, 1890, Mekinock, N.D., son of Olaf Sveinungsen Houkom and Anne Marie Glerum.

Letters Written On	To	From	On Page numbered
December 20, 1932	Marius	Blanchardville, Wis.	96, Book II

ALVHILDE MARGARETTE HOUKOM

born December 20, 1897, Mekinock, N.D., daughter of Olaf Sveinungsen Houkom and Anna Dahlum.

Letters Written On	To	From	On Page numbered
(1975 or 1976)	Helen	Fargo, N.D.	107, Book II

(P. A5) Translator's note: In spite of much research, I have as yet been unable to ascertain whether the writer of letters to Thora, signed "Anna", was actually Anna Dahlum, who became Olaf's second wife a few months after the last letter was written. Many clues indicate that she was. The main argument against that theory is that the first letter was addressed from Granville, P.O., and the only Granville I have so far been able to locate is in north central North Dakota, and there is no record that "Grandma" ever lived there. I have written to the Post Master of Oslo, Minnesota, near Grandma's childhood home, to see if there was a settlement with a post office named Granville, somewhere in that area, in 1892, but so far I have received no reply. Because the evidence "for" is more than the evidence "against", I am listing Anna's letters with the only one I have which was written by Olaf's second wife. If I am mistaken, I hope that "Grandma's" descendants will forgive me. But if she wasn't Grandma, who was Anna?

ANNA J. DAHLUM

born August 30, 1874 in Ishpeming, Mich. daughter of Joe Dahlum and Margrette Moe ". Married November 28, 1893, to Olaf Sveinungsen Houkom. Died July 1958, in Twin Valley, Minn.

Letters Written On	To	From	On Page numbered
September 24, 1892	Thora	Granville, P.O.	77, Book II
November 16, 1892	Thora	Grand Forks	78, Book II
December 1, 1892	Thora	Grand Forks	79, Book II
December 11, 1892	Thora	Grand Forks	80, Book II
January 11, 1893	Thora	Grand Forks	81, Book II
April 15, 1893	Thora	Grand Forks	83, Book II
April 25, 1893	Thora	Grand Forks	84, Book II
January 17, 1918	Alvhilde	Fargo	95, Book II

June 1984: A letter from the Oslo Postmaster solves the mystery. There was a Granville Post Office, 1 ½ miles south of Oslo. It was closed in 1905 when the Soo Railroad came through Oslo. The current Oslo Postmaster is Adeloide Larson Johnson.

## (P. A6) LETTERS FROM OTHER WRITERS

Date	From	At	To	Page
18 Dec 1856	Svenung Oversen (Kjaerkebø)	Coon Prairie	Svenung Hukum	3, Book II
23 Oct 1866	Svenung Kjaerkebø	Coon Prairie	Svenung Houkom	5, Book II
15 Jan 1870	Ole Halvorsen Klevstul	Hampton, Iowa	Svenung Olsen	21, Book I
29 Mar 1870	Anders Hansen Houkom	Gjorsund, Norway	Ole Svenningsen Houkom	7, Book II
21 May 1870	Gunlek Gundersen Dalen	Pomme de Terre, Minn.	Svennung Olsen	22, Book I
20 June 1870	Andreas Ness	Chipewa, Minn	Svennung Olsen	8, Book II
4 Jan 1871	Gregor Kittilsen	Troy P. O., Minn	Aslau Halvorsdatter Lande	48, Book I
24 Mar 1871	Gunlek Gundersen Dalen	Pomme de Terre	Svennung Olsen	47, Book I
30 Dec 1880	Bergit Olsdotter Midtsund	Taylor, Wisc	Svennung Olsen	48, Book I
6 Jan 1881	Egelev Olsdotter Midtsund	Taylor	Brother. (Aslak?)	49, Book I
5 Apr 1881	Dorte Bergseth	Taylor	Uncle and Aunt	50, Book I
5 Dec 1885	Aslak Olesen Houkom	Porsgrund, Norway	Svennung	26, Book II
14 Sept 1888	Johans Thorsen Klevstul	Klevstul, Norway	Aslak Svenningsen Houkom	63, Book II
4 Nov 1890	Johans Thorsen Klevstul	Klevstul	Aslak	67, Book II
23 Nov 1902	R. Berg	(indecipherable) Norway	S. O. Houkom	85, Book II

(P. A7) OLAF SVEINUNGSSEN'S PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

In Final Examination at Hvideseid's Modern School from 27 April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 1866 gained Olaf Sveinungsen the following characters:

For Theory	2+
For Bible Expounding	2+
For Bible History	2
For Mother Tongue, orally	2-
For Mother Tongue, written	3
For Arithmetic	2-
For Measurement	2-
For Natural Science	1 ½
For Reading from a book	2
For Geography	1 ½
For History	2
For Writing	2
For Drawing	2-

Main character Very Good (2.04)

Hvideseid Modern School, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1866

H. Hesselberg. Aslak Houkom

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Hvideseid Parish Ministerial Book shows that Olaf Svennungsen was born the 30<sup>th</sup> - thirtieth - May 1850 - eighteen hundred and fifty - of parents Svennung Olsen and wife Marie Hansdatter. Farm people at Houkom in Hvideseide Parish. baptized the 14<sup>th</sup> - fourteen - July next thereafter. confirmed the 2<sup>nd</sup> - second - October 1864 - sixty four - with the testimonial "Perfectly good".

He is not here in the congregation where he for the last time was a guest at the Lord's table the 1<sup>st</sup> - first - April last Sunday with some publicity and making promises: and since he now has decided to leave his Fatherland to travel to America he is herewith dismissed from Hvideseide's Parish, where his conduct here was one of the greatest decorum, with the wish that he hereafter will strive after that his senses can be strengthened in his heart by the Holy Ghost, that they who seek the Lord should not suffer lack of anything good.

Hvideseid Parish  
the 2 April 1870  
Legally determined payment  
32 thirty-two shillings

John Moses  
Parish Parson at  
Kviteseid

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(P. A8) DISMISSAL CERTIFICATE

Aslak Svejnungen Haukom  
from

Hvidesejd Parish, born the 4<sup>th</sup> May 1864, was accepted as a student in Hvideseid Seminary the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1881 and has since received instruction in all the subjects required by the Regulations of the Seminary in combination with practical instruction for teaching in a school for the common people.

In a Dismissal Examination held from 23 April till 5<sup>th</sup> of this month he achieved the following characters:

For Theory	almost perfectly good	1.5
For Bible Expounding	almost perfectly good	1.5
For Bible and Church History	almost perfectly good	1.5
For Reading and Writing Verse	very good	2-
For Grammar and Analysis	almost perfectly good	1.5
For Written Norwegian	almost very good	2.5
For History	almost very good	2.5
For Geography	very good	2+
For Behavior and Spirituality	very good	2+
For Natural Science	almost perfectly good	1.5
For Arithmetic	perfectly good	1.3
For Writing	very good	1.9
For the exam for Curates	almost very good	2.5
For the other practical Exams	very good	2-

He has here received instruction in Drawing and Gymnastic.

As a result of the above specific characters he obtained according to the rules of the Seminary the character: Very Capable (1.87)

His moral conduct during his attendance at the Institution has been Praiseworthy.

It is remarked, that he has a very good singing voice and especially good ear.

By reason of such result of his dismissal examination he is herewith awarded a Certificate for Capability to Conduct a School for the Common People as a Teacher.

Hvideseid School-Teacher Seminary the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1883

M. Gløersen

V. Taraldsen

O. L. Gjørwad

Translator's note: This is the first time I have found Svejnung spelled with a j instead of i or a double n. Most of this certificate is printed with the gaps filled by pen. The j and i are both used in the parish name, Hvideseid where printed, Hvidesejd where written. Small letters are used to begin the names of months. For the "characters", or grades, it appears that the better the student's ability the smaller the number.

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(P. A9) Aslak's Report to the School Board August 9, 1888

To The Congregation Board for Hoel's Congregation

Although I am not required to issue a report on the school here in the cong., it will perhaps not lie outside the congregation's interest to see how the school has been attended, and it can also be significant for the incoming teacher to see what the children have accomplished. Therefore the following list:

First 1 ½ month in the schoolhouse near A. V. Bakken

Children's names	Age	Attendance	Remarks
1. Teodor O. Trageton	16	16 days	The children, whose names include numbers 1 to 12, have been in the same class; they have gone through the old Testament in bible history. In explanation they have this summer gone through the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> parts as well as to question 604 in the 5 <sup>th</sup> part.
2. Arne O. Trageton	15	16 ½	
3. Nils Erikson	14	27 ½	
4. Ole H. Solem	14	24	
5. Ole Erikson	12	22 ½	
6. Arne E. Thorsgaard	14	17	
7. Syver Østli	12	16	
8. Jakob Østli	14 ½	1	
9. Tina A. Bakken	11 ½	28	
10. Gurine O. Trageton	12 ½	25 ½	
11. Guri O. Trageton	10	26 ½	
12. Anne Erickson	10	22 ½	
13. Martin O. Berg	8 ½	21 ½	read bib. hist
14. Ole Thorsgaard	9	22	memorized bib. hist & catechism.
15. George T. Mehus	9	22	memories a little bib. hist & cat.
16. Nina A. Bakken	9	29	read in A.B.C. reading book
17. Henry Torsgaard	6 ½	23	read in A.B.C.
18. Berdinius Aslakson	12	12	memorized a little bib. hist & expl.
19. Simon Olson	12	7	(See the school at B. Brandsen's for 19-21)
20. Ole Olsen	9	6	
21. Caroline Olson	14	6	

(P. A10) 1 ½ month in the schoolhouse at B. Brandsen's

Children's names	Age	Attendance	Remarks
1.Elias Erikson	16	10 days	The children numbered 1 to 12 have been in the same class in explanation and have in this book gone through the commandments. In bible history they began with the birth of Moses; most of them have come to "the division of the Kingdom" some have read the old Testament all through and a few have gone through the new Testament.
2.Abert A. Hanssen	15	10	
3.John Ellingson	14	11	
4.Helge Paulson	14	27	
5.Arne Thorsgaard	12	14	
6.Johan Erickson	14	23	
7.Simon Olson	12	17	
8.Helge Hansson	14 ½	15	
9.Gro S. Olson	11 ½	16	
10.Malvine Erickson	12 ½	16	
11.Birgit A. Olson	10	19	
12.Andrina A. Hanson	10	1	
13.Oscar Evanson	8 ½	3	A.B.C. reader
14.Ole Thorsgaard	9	16	memorized bib. hist & catechism
15.Henry Thorsgaard	9	14	read in A.B.C.
16.Ole A. Olson	9	7	memorized catechism
17.Mikkel Paulson	6 ½	5	memorized bib. hist & expl.
18.Ole Pederson	12	3	memorized a little in catechism
19.Klaudine Erickson	12	16	memorized A.B.C. reading book
20.Gina A. Kjørven	9	17	memorized catechism
21.Anetta A. Kjørven	14	7	died 24 May
22. Louise Evanson	9 ½	20	memorized bib. hist & catechism
23. Anne M. Ellingson	8 ½	10	memorized bib. hist & catechism
24.Lena A. Hansson	10	3	memorized bib. hist & catechism
25.Astri Marie Evanson	11	12	memorized bib. hist & catechism
26.Ingeborg Pederson	13	4	memorized bib. hist & expl.

1 ½ month in the schoolhouse at Thor Sand's

Children's names	Age	Attendance	Remarks
1. Ole Gudbrandons	15	17 ½ days	The first 5 children have been in the same class in explanation and have gone through from questions 202 to qu. 290 in Sverdrup's Expl.
2. Elef Borgen	14	9 ½ days	
3. Sissel Tufte	9	12 ½ days	
4. Jørund Ekern	13	7 ½ days	
5. Julia T. Naas	11	10	
6. Henry Syverson	11	26 ½ days	Children No. 6-12 have in explanation gone through from the beginning to the 4 <sup>th</sup> commandment.
7. Hellek Ekern	11	14 ½ days	
8. Ole Nordbø	11	19	
9. Anton Gudbrandson	11	13 ½ days	
10. Henrik T. Naas	9 ½	11	
11. Ingeborg Borgen	9	11 ½ days	
12. Anne Midbø	12	19	
13. Carl V. Syverson	9	24 ½ days	One class in bib. hist. began at the beginning and learned to Jakob and Esau. This class was No. 1, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 & 15. One class in bib. hist. began with the birth of Moses, went through to "David and Goliath". This was No. 2, 3, & 4. These have also read perfectly in the catechism: No. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25 & 27.  To avoid writing so many names I have listed the children by numbers in this report. I must mention that they are not listed according to ability.
14. Gilbert Gudbrandson	9	21 ½ days	
15. Johannes Tufte	8	14 ½ days	
16. Erick Tufte	7	12 ½ days	
17. Carl Ekern	10	14 ½ days	
18. Gjermund Nordbø	7 ½	17	
19. Ole O. Maristuen	6	5	
20. Carl Gudbrandson	6	3	
21. Martin Davidsonø	8	4	
22. Emil Davidson	10	5	
23. Andres Hus		5 ½ days	read in catechism
24. Lina Hus		7	memorized in catechism
25. Sofie Maristuen	9	4	memorized in catechism
26. Dina Maristuen	12	7	mem. in Expl. & little in bib. hist.
27. Marie T. Naas	7	10	memorized in catechism
28. Ida Syverson	7	28 ½ days	
29. Ingeborg Winden	7	29 ½ days	mem. in bib. hist. & catechism

As may be seen in the report the school at B. Branden's was poorly attended, which is because almost all the children for shorter or longer time had measles. The same causes are partly the excuse in the other two places. In addition I help 3 examination days in the school near A. Bakken and 3 in the school near B. Branden, in addition to the noted school time.

Respectfully,

A. S. Houkom

Northwood, Dak 9<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1888

Translator's note: I have included Aslak's report to the appendix because I think it will be of interest to modern teachers. It is an enlightening snippet of pioneer history, including the death of the youngest student enrolled, presumably from measles.

Aslak omits the 'h' from No. 17 in the first list, but has it for the 15 in the second list, probably a slip; Henry Torsgaard - Henry Thorsgaard. The three boys attended both sessions. He also omits remarks or ditto marks for No. 28 in the last list, so we don't know what Ida achieved. D.R.

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(P. A11) Newspapers, 1824 & 1833

Among the original Houkom documents are eight small newspapers, with dates in the 1820's and 1830's. Ole Bjørnsen Houkom subscribed to many publications, and wrote numerous articles for them, but at that time writers for the press often remained anonymous. The fact that these eight papers were kept seems to indicate that they contained material important to him, either for its news, or perhaps a contribution by him; but nothing in any of them bears his name.

One article in particular I suspect may have been written by Ole Bjørnson, so I have translated it. Even if it is not his, I feel it may be of interest to readers in the 1980's, because many of its themes are applicable to modern conditions. For the rest of the papers I have noted the subject matter briefly.

Four papers are copies of "Morgenbladet - En Daglig Avis av Alle Slags Indhøld"; which means "Morning Paper - A Daily Newspaper of All Kinds of Subject-Matter;" the others are "Statsborgeren - En Tidende for Norges Vel"; meaning "State Citizen - A Newspaper for Norway's Welfare". D.R.

Morgenbladet Saturday, January 24, 1824

An announcement about Free Vaccination.

The main article is on the dishonesty of smuggling. It is headed "Contributed", and "Translated from 'Franklin's relaxing Writings 5<sup>th</sup> Volume page 123'." After the first paragraph there is a wide gap, then the main body of the article, so I do not know if the whole or only the first paragraph is from Franklin.

The second article is Political remarks.

The rest is ads.

Morgenbladet      Wednesday, April 14, 1824

The main article contains speeches at the opening of the Storting on April 13, by the President, Secretary of State, etc., Count Wedel-Jarlsberg, and His Royal Highness, Prince Oscar (son of Swedish King, Karl Johan, regent of Norway).

The second article is a story about Georg Franz Koltschitzky. He was a Viennese spy under the Turkish siege of Vienna in spring, 1683. Koltschitzky safely carried messages through the besieging army camp to the allies of Austria, so the Turks were beaten and fled. A great deal of coffee was captured in the abandoned camp, and Koltschitzky became the Proprietor of the First Coffee House in Vienna.

Morgenbladet      Friday, May 21, 1824

After the ads, the whole thing is a report from the Storting about changes and additions to laws. (As Ole Bjørnsen was not in the Storting at this time, he kept track of what the legislators were doing through the papers; hence his preservation of this one.)

Morgenbladet      Monday, December 6, 1824

This contains many items from around the world, including Parry's approach to the North Magnetic Pole in the ship "Griper" and items from Russia, France, Mexico, Spain, England, Greece, South America and shipping news. Also the usual quota of ads.

(P. A12) Statsborgeren      June 24, 1832

1. A letter about 17<sup>th</sup> May Celebrations (Norway's Independence Day). The writer says that toasts are given for heroes, patriots, popular representatives, etc., but why not for the Members of the Cabinet? (Statsraad)
2. A report on a trial for embezzlement.
3. & 4. Reports on the May 17<sup>th</sup> Festivities from various cities.

Statsborgeren      April 4, 1833      An Article Sent in

Once again Norway's Representatives are gathered to work for the welfare of the Fatherland. But just as varying as Nature has made our rocky Lake, so varied, one can almost say, are, usually, the interests of the inhabitants, and it is certainly most difficult to make decisions in harmony with the general wish.

As a less enlightened man I will however dare to bring to notice one thing, which need only be named to show what is common to the whole country, and that is a lack of money. Certainly nothing new, but isn't it as though Norway's genius has slept, when this important lack has been discussed? Or is there no solution, which can free our country from this destructive evil? Which taxpaying citizen is it, who doesn't more or less feel the privation of the condition of money-circulation, and I wish I had a knowledgeable man's writing-talent to be able to bring daily experience to light, as proof of my statements.

What is the cause, in our nation, for lack of enthusiasm over our designation as free, independent Norwegian citizens? Let everyone compare these important words with the often seen announcement: "Lovely home for sale" and further - when the auctioneer's hammer crashes down, after such a sale, telling the citizen that every loved possession: furniture, pets, house, and land, are all taken from him, because his long struggles to save all that he held dear have been

fruitless, - and all because of the impossibility of earning a little money - yes - try with this man to inspire a sense of gladness in his freedom and independence - what a hope!

No longer is it as it used to be, when a man, often without a bond, without security, merely went to his friend, and with a warm handshake, a word of encouragement, received a loan of several hundred dollars. Who is it, who now has a few dollars to spare? And if there is anyone with such a rarity, isn't it someone who uses his money in such a way as I hate to describe.

From the King, the Government, and many patriotic men, one hears encouragement to work hard, be industrious, improve your land; but what use is it, being told what we ought to do, when we have not the means to do it? Here also is the terrifying circumstance, which also is a result of the lack of money, that the products which the industrious Norwegian farmer wrings from Norway's hard nature, pay him so little for all his striving and expense, no matter to what destinations, near or far, he sends them. There is no lack of would-be buyers - but their cry is - "We have no money". Enlightenment - the sister of Freedom - what progress can this make in a moneyless time? A simple man can not afford teachers for his children, has no way of buying good books, can not belong to a lecture society, can not subscribe to a newspaper. And what about religion and morals in such ignorance and poverty? Only those who have known the struggle for subsistence can comprehend what this means: no gentle feelings can calm their worries, not even the comfort of religion, however warmly interpreted; because the dark clouds of the future overwhelm the sufferers.

(P. A13) I mentioned morals - but what a wide wilderness opens before the poverty-stricken. Selfishness, deception, faithlessness, every known vice, have in all times had their examples among men. But what if vice, promising a reward, becomes more prevalent when money is scarce? It appears as the only way out of difficulties, the only way to procure what one needs, to find relief from despair.

What is the cause of the tragic quarrel, which arises between the father of the family and his eldest son, concerning the taking over of the family estate, the last one entitled to it by birth? Who can realize the son's fear, that if taking over his father's farm, not even the striving of the whole family, can make it productive enough to sustain any of them, certainly it can not give him the fortune young people hope for. He foresees all the burdens, the old as well as the young to feed, interest to pay, taxes, freight, all descending upon him like a merciless Fate, with not one attraction for a thinking man. Many and tragic are the consequences, including the abandonment of many family estates by the young.

It is well known that Norway does not lack genius and artists in all subjects, but why are so few of them reaching for the goal of development? What use is an inventive man, when he lacks the means to bring his ideas to fruition? How can he without money? In all areas money is vital. The artist must be able to sell his work. And how discouraging it is when foreign art is sought, by those who do have money.

Business - which our country needs - loses much because of the lack of money in circulation. Nowadays much bartering of wares for wares is being used, and that is a type of business, but it does not cover the State's demand for taxes; and it cannot be used all the time, or in all places.

Those in official positions have no need to complain of the lack of money, as their source of money is the surest of all, as long as the taxpaying citizen can make his contributions. Meanwhile, some in public office are able to avoid many of the financial worries that plague others, as they know ways and means that the honorable ones would dread to use.

For the rest, the writer allows himself to believe that the current lack of money works great hardship between suppliers and consumers.

Honorable Representatives and friends of the fatherland, bring balance and harmony back to our nation's society, and you will have done enough to be remembered with honor.

A Farmer in the Hills.

Note from the Translator: It is unlikely that we can ever ascertain whether the above article was written by Ole Bjørnsen Houkom; but we do know that he wrote for the papers; and this paper was preserved and brought to America by his son, and kept by his grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and now two more generations can read it. All the ideas expressed in it match those emphasized in his biography: care for the poor, the problems of farmers, dishonesty in officials, interest in the arts. Personally, I want to believe it was written by this wonderful man, the first in the family to bear the name Houkom. D.R.

(P. A14) Statsborgeren 17 May 1833

1. A poem with 5 verses, entitled "Vivat for Dagen" (Salute the Day) enlarging on Freedom, the Flag, heroism, etc.
2. Another 5 verse poem, in memory of Krohg, presumably the lawyer, Christian Krohg, who was chairman of the committee appointed by the Storting in 1824 to work on the Constitution, and smooth out the difficulties between the King of Sweden, officially also Norway's king, and the independence-desiring Norwegians.
3. A contributed article about the scorn and humiliation heaped on Norway by foreign journalists and novelists.
4. A short article criticizing those who make false statements about the character of youth.
5. Report from the Storting.
6. An article on public finances.
7. A letter, appearing at first to criticize a previous writer whose message seemed likely to provoke a war - but then using sarcasm to say we should not complain about injustice, evil in high places, etc., because we might get our clothes muddied if we get involved.
8. An article about a proposed monument to Krohg.
9. A paragraph about the strange similarity of thoughts, expressions, and opinions, among people in widely differing places.

Statsborgeren 23 May 1833

1. A continuation of the article on public finances, from the last issue.
2. An article suggesting changes in the law which requires farmers to have horses and vehicles available at all times for transporting travelers from the individual farmer's neighborhood to the

next.

3. A letter to the writer's father.
4. A poem about someone who could suddenly speak other languages.
5. Messages about subscriptions.

Translator's note: Although several of the above articles are interesting, I have not translated them for the current book, as they do not have specific family content. As I read Article 2. in May 23, I thought it sounded like the kind of thing Ole Bjørnsen might have written; but at the end it has the initials, T.V.; so the article was probably kept because O. B. agreed with it. The law requiring "skyss" (transportation) available in all districts was very hard on many farmers, especially on those who lived in districts not often traveled. They had to feed horses and maintain one or more sleds and carriages to be available if an important person was brought in from another district and needed to get to the next. Payment was small, the horses continued to eat whether used or not, and a farm worker could be spared with difficulty, to act as driver during a busy season. Sometimes a driver returning to the home farm in winter, would be killed, along with the horse, on an icy mountain road, or frozen to death, or go through soft ice and drown in a lake. The writer wanted better payment for the farmers, whether or not the required equipment was used. D.R.

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(P. A15) Notes made by Aslak Sveinungsen Houkom  
after his trip to Norway in 1930 (with additions after his death)

Hans Pedersøn Saltevje, born Friday, March 12, 1780, in Ulefoss; married Anne Andersdatter Jøntveit, from Helgen (Helgasokn), born Tuesday, December 24, 1782. Their children were Anders Hansen Saltevje, born Friday, February 16, 1816, and Mari Hansdatter Saltevje, born Monday, January 3, 1825. Their home was in Flaabygd. Hans died Monday, February 17, 1862, age 81; Anne died Friday, December 23, 1859, age 77.

Children of Sveinung Olsen Houkom and Mari Hansdatter Saltevje:

Order	Born	Died	Age
Olaf	Fri 31 May* 1850	Sat 6 Nov 1920	70
Anne (Mrs. Ole Ness)	Thur 8 Apr * 1852	Tues 22 Feb 1916	63
Hans	Wed 21 Feb * 1855	Tues 18 June 1901	46
Tarjer (Thora) (Mrs. Meyer)	Tues 16 Sept 1856	Sun 7 June 1925	68
Tone	Sat 30 July 1859	Fri 23 Mar 1888	28
Anders	Sat 17 Aug 1861	Sat 4 June 1938	76
Aslak	Wed 4 May 1864	Sun 16 Oct 1938	74
Anne Andrea	Tues 19 June 1866	Wed 17 Nov 1943	76

Translator's note: Aslak's notes are typed. Whoever added dates after Aslak's death, used a pen, has changed the dates which I have marked \*. He has crossed out 31 in Olaf's birth date and written in 30; changed Anne's from 8 to 7, Hans' to 8 Apr., which is the date given for Anne. In the margin the later writer has noted that Olaf died in Fargo, Hans in Fosstom, Tone in Manvel. I find to Fosstom listed for North Dakota, Minnesota, or Wisconsin, but Minnesota has a Fosston and a Fossum, the former in Polk County, the latter in Norman County, near Twin Valley. By underlining he indicates that Sveinung, Mari, Anne, and Tarjer were buried in Roseau County. He does not indicate where Anders, Aslak, and Anne Andrea were buried, but other papers give Badger, Minn., as the burial place for Aslak and Thora, and Badger is in Roseau County. I suspect that the pen additions were by John Houkom.

Dates are also given for Anne's husband and their eldest son;  
Ole G. Ness, born Wed 27 Sept 1848, died Fri Jan 2, 1925, Age 76  
Gunnuld O. Ness, born Sat. Jan 11, 1879, died Sat Oct 2, 1926, Age 47

In a typed footnote, Aslak mentions that it is only for Sveinung and Mari's children that he has given a full list, but that there were many other children he has not named. Ole and Anne had several, including Svennung, the small boy who had whooping cough when they emigrated, a girl born soon after they reached America in 1886, as well as one born in 1883, and Thone, born in February 1891. Brief mention of these can be found in the correspondence. Anders refers to his own children in a letter to his father, (Page 88, Book II) but gives no names.

Ole Ness is often referred to as Olaf Saltevje, but as his middle initial is G., he is probably not a nephew of Mari, whose brother was Anders; but he may be a cousin's son; or of a different family who also lived at Saltevje in Flaabygd. Norwegian names can be confusing.

Aslak dated these notes April 4, 1932.

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(P. A16) Aslak's notes

## ASLAK O. GADEHOLT'S FAMILY RECORD

The notes included here are copied from the first page of the bible which belonged to Aslak O. Gadeholt. The notes are written by A.O.G. himself until his death. The last, after his death, by his son Sveinung. (Edited and rearranged by the translator.)

Aslak O. Gadeholt, born May 22, 1814, son of Ole Bjørnsen Houkom and his second wife, Egelev Aslaksdatter Kirkebø. Aslak Gadeholt was married three times.

1. On July 18, 1842 to Thone Knutsdatter Flextveit (July 27, 1821 - 1850)

Their children: Torjus May 22, 1843 - July 11, 1843  
Egelev, Sept 1, 1844 - Oct 24, 1882  
Anne, Mar 24, 1847 - Dec 1, 1874

2. In 1852 to Gro Saavesdatter Vesterdal (Nov 28, 1831 - Nov 20, 1887)

Their children: Tone, 1852 - June 10, 1874  
Daardi, June 15, 1854 - ?  
Birgit, May 7, 1856 - July 4, 1883  
\*\*Olaf, Apr 12, 1858  
Saave, July 18, 1860  
Knut, Sept 4, 1862  
\*\*\*Aslaug, Apr 15, 1865  
Bjørn, July 4, 1867  
Gunhild, July 15, 1879

3. On November 7, 1888 to Haege Jorgensdatter Øiland (?? - Dec 21, 1912)

Their children: Sveinung, March 15, 1889  
Gro, May 28, 1893

Aslak O. Gadeholt died August 10, 1895

Translator's notes: \* Egelev married "Churchsinger" Hans Utbø, who was born October 14, 1849, and died Oct 19, 1875. According to Aslak Sveinungsen Houkom's notes, Egelev's gravestone gives her death as August 24, 1882. He remarks: "Either there is a mistake on Egelev's gravestone, or else I have copied incorrectly. For according to A.O.G.'s record it was October 24 Egelev died. I was at Egelev's funeral and it was so cold we froze while we drove from Gadeholt in Kviteseid to Siljord's Church, and my impression is, that it was late in the autumn. We were not so little frozen when, after the funeral, we stopped in at Utbø for refreshments."

\*\* According to a letter from Sveinung (Book II, page 37) Olaf Gadeholt was to marry Anne Kaasa, in spring, 1887, and take over "the farm". Possibly it was Anne's family farm, as there is a later reference to Olaf Kaasa.

\*\*\*The same letter mentions that Aslaug Gadeholt was to marry L. Storgaard. D.R.

Aslak dated these notes December 25, 1932

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(P. A17) Tov Torjussen (born 1795) worked for his half-brother Ole Bjørnsen Houkom at Houkom, and was there married on June 17, 1821, to Ingeborg Auversdatter Hove. For many years they lived at Skobig, but moved later to Brekke, where they lived until their deaths. Their children: Andres 1821, Birgit 1826, Torjus 1828, Gunvor 1832, Gunhild 1836.

#### Confirmations in Kviteseid

May 29, 1842: Birgit Tovsdatter Skovig

June 22, 1845: Torjus Tovsen Skovig

Sveinung O. Houkom (and others)

1848: Gunvor Tovsdatter Brekke

Olaf O. Houkom (Staaland)

Johane Klevstul (See Book II, pp 63-65, 67-68)

(There are many others listed, but these are the ones of interest to the family.)

#### Marriages

Nov 14, 1850 John Halvorsen Homme (Orlie) to Birgit Tovsdatter Brekke. (Tr Note: Notice that when Birgit was confirmed her last name was Skovig; but since then the family has moved to Brekke, so her last name has changed along with the dwelling. The change affected all the brothers and sisters still at home. D.R.)

Jan 20, 1852 Andres Tovsen Brekke to Birgit Bjørgulfsdatter Houkom. (Tr. note: I have no information about the Bjørgulf who lived at Houkom and was father to the bride. He may or may not have been related to the descendants of Ole Bjørnsen. D.R.)

Aug 11, 1863 Torjus Tovsen Brekke to Kjersti Torgrimsdatter Rollefstad.

(There are many others listed in Aslak's notes, but most of them were for the benefit of his friends, Tom Johnson and sister Ingeborg, who lived in Whitehall, Wisconsin. The Skovigs and Brekkes are related to the Houkoms because they are descendants of Ole Bjørnsen's half-brother Tov, but as far as I know the others are not. D.R.)

#### THE NAME HOUKOM

I shall not attempt to translate all of Aslak's notes on the name Houkom, because they include references to the use of the name in many districts, with reference to manuscripts as far back as 1452, and numerous variations in spelling, e.g. Howquame, Hukum, Houchumb, Houckum, Hauk-vammr, Haukome, Haukeimr, Haukjem, etc., and as the name did not belong to the family until Ole Bjørnsen bought the farm, Haukom, the main interest is in the meaning of the name and its origins. Aslak gives the opinions of experts on the possible pronunciations of all the variants, and the possible original meanings of the syllables. In some areas the name probably meant "Hawk Cliff" but the three Haukom farms in Kviteseid were bordered by a stream named Hauka, (possibly an abbreviation from Haukelv, or Hawk River), so the farm name may originally have meant the Home by Hauka.

Aslak mentions that Ole Bjørnsen believed it to mean High Home. The modern Norwegian word for high would be høy or høg, but the dialect had many variations; home could be heim, hjem, etc. so it is possible that a locally spelled combination of these two words could become Houkom. D.R.

(P. A18) Newspaper Item by Olaf, 1900

A Few Words of Explanation

As I have become aware of a Plea for Help for my brother, Hans Houkom, who lives in the vicinity of Fosston, Minn., I must beg you, Mr. Editor, for space for a few lines. My dear uncle, Aslak O. Houkom from York, Wis., who has written the Plea, has certainly done it with the best condition, as far as I understand, and therefore a few words of explanation.

There has been no appreciable change to his health. He is totally blind, so he can not tell the difference between night and day, except when the sun shines very clearly, then flames of light seem to flicker before his eyes, which condition is extremely painful for him.

The epileptic attacks, which were very severe and frequent for a time after his operation, are now much less frequent, of shorter duration, and much milder. But he suffers almost every day from pressure and throbbing in his head and as a result, he must sit still or lie down for most of the time.

The economic outlook for the family was very dark. Of about 170 acres of land, which he had, only the 16 acres were under the plow, and only a small part meadow, the rest are big woods. With a debt of about \$600, there was, under the aforementioned circumstances, no great hope of being able to manage such a farm with 5 children, of whom the eldest is only 10 or 11 years old. People readily understand this, who knew the circumstances, and have therefore been very kind to them. Dr. Engstad undertook the difficult and critical operation without charge. Their creditors have been for the most part lenient with them. The neighbours have been helpful towards them by driving for them in other ways, of which there can be many under such circumstances. An important collection, which Pastor Refsdal initiated, occurred in Fosston and the neighborhood about a year ago. I don't remember the amount, which was published in "Decorah-Posten" last year. Last summer, the Women's Society of Middle Grove Congregation, in my pastorate, sent \$25 and since then \$8 were sent by other friends in the same Congregation.

All this was done without the least suggestion from our - namely his brothers' - side, for we were in agreement over bearing the burden, which the Lord would lay on us for our needy brother and his family, without any intention to seek or undertake anything which would involve help from strangers. But you see, help has come anyway, the Lord be thanked and praised for it.

However, what has most contributed to the easing of their circumstances and the lightening of their future outlook in material ways, is the sale of their land, which took place last autumn. They were well paid for their farm, so that they now have a little sum with which they can buy a more easily worked piece of land, where they can with ease begin to raise a few animals. They have an opportunity to acquire such land at a reasonable price; so they can, with a little forethought get themselves a fairly comfortable home again without debt.

The purpose of these lines, is first, to bring my hearty thanks in this way to all, who have come to the aid of my brother and his family in their heavy trial, and, second, to clear up the misunderstanding, that the family should be in such difficult circumstances, that they suffer lack or are a burden on us brothers. That is now, God be Praised, not the case.

(P. A19) But I have a request to make of you, dear Christian Readers: remember the family in your prayers; I know, they would appreciate that. And if any of you are one of my brother's many friends or relatives, send him an encouraging letter, if you can, or a friendly greeting, if you have the opportunity; it will cheer him up, who finds himself in the dark by day as by night and can scarcely come out of his own door. His lot is heavy, but it is a joy for me to tell, that he bears it with a Christian's patience.

O. S. Houkom  
Mekinock, N.D.

Translator's note: This should perhaps have been included among the letters, but it was hidden among some small papers containing Olaf's theological notes, and I overlooked it. I apologize for the oversight.

It clears up the mystery of Hans' burial place: Fosston, Minn., not Fosstom, as mentioned on page A 15, (Book II).

There is no date on the clipping, but the Article on the back of it is titled "The New Century", so it was probably early in 1900. Hans died in June 1901.

There is also no name on the paper, but as Olaf refers to "Decorah-Posten", a very popular Norwegian language paper published in America, this cutting is probably from that paper. D.R.