

# SCANDINAVIANS IN SKAGIT VALLEY.

## CHAPTER XII.

Sweetest and loveliest of flowery vales,  
Where plenty teems and joy hails,  
Where waving fields of golden grain  
Merrily smile in sun and rain.



MORLING HOUSE.

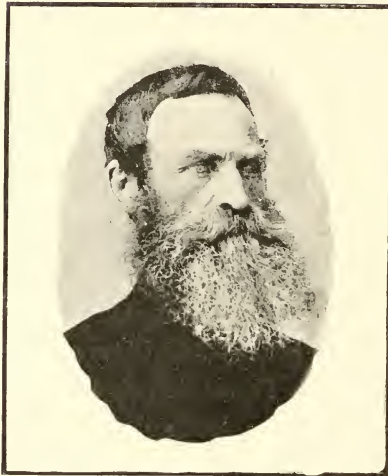
Owned by Knut H. Opdal, the first Scandinavian Hotel in the Skagit Valley.

The Skagit valley is a stretch of inexhaustible fertility, commencing at the mouth of the river and running north-

ward for scores of miles, and spreads out, east and west, into a plain beautifully embellished with proud farms, and mostly populated with Scandinavians. Six miles up the river rests the town of Fir, a bustling village, surrounded by a rich farming community. Ole J. Borseth is the leading business man of the town, who located here, 1883, and in 1891 engaged in general merchandise. He is a native of Norway, where he was bred and educated.

Knuk H. Opdal, also born in Norway, arrived in 1888, and shortly afterward embarked in hotel business. He and his wife are representatives of Norse simplicity and integrity, imbued with love for their native country, and patriotic and loyal to the stars and stripes.

J. F. Anderson was one of the first settlers. He was born in Sweden, left his native land during the early summer of maturity, and located in the state of Iowa. In 1874 he landed in Port Townsend on Prince Alfred, and immediately proceeded to the Skagit valley, settling on North Fork. After a year of hard work he moved with his family to Seattle in order to give his children the advantages of good schooling. At the close of six years they returned to the Skagit, locating on South Fork, where Fir now stands. In 1883 a flood rushed over the country, swept along everything save some stubborn buildings, the crop was destroyed, and havoc spread in all directions. "Never give in," says the sage, which is applicable to Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Anderson. "Onward" was their motto, and two beautiful homes shine to their honest efforts—



J. F. ANDERSON.

one at Seattle and one at Fir. Their children, who are now combating with the turmoils of the world, are well educated and highly respected. Jennie is married and lives in Seattle; Axel and Eric are connected with the Polson and Wilson Hardware Co., established in Seattle and La Conner; Victor is married to an esteemed lady, Miss Marie Paulson, and runs the farm; Minnie is postmistress at Fir and a teacher of music, Howard sleeps in the grave, and Otto stays home.

Andrew N. Crogstad, a leading citizen, a man of honor and intelligence, has shared the difficulties of the frontier. He was born in Trondhjem, Norway, 1852, received a good schooling and in February, 1872, left his fatherland for Dunn county, Wisconsin, and five years later disembarked in the Skagit valley. He turned his attention to logging and farming. A beautiful farm, surrounded by a wealthy orchard, stands as a pride to his energy. He has seen days of romantic awfulness, once hazardous, but now pleasing reminiscences. The flood has always been a dread, and many frights has it caused. One Fourth of July Mr. Crogstad went to Fir to celebrate the independence of his adopted country. The morning was bright and prognostic of a pleasant time. Returning home during gray twilight, a seething, rolling sound floated down on the breeze, and ere they realized the cause, water crept up to their feet. The ladies were frightened out of their wits and took to screaming, which seems to be their only alternative in time of danger. Mr. Crogstad and his



ANDREW N. CROGSTAD.



MRS. WILHELMINA AUGUSTA CROGSTAD.

companion understood the predicament, slung the ladies on their backs and pranced home, thus avoiding a disastrous outcome.

In 1887 he was married to an estimable lady, Miss Wilhelmina Augusta Jensen, born in Scleswig, Holstein, 1863, of Danish parentage, and came to America, 1875. They have five children, four girls and one boy; Alvina, Emma, Lottie, Clara and Maurice.

One not accustomed to pioneer life in the forest can hardly conceive its many romantic features. To live on the bank of a big river, rolling and moaning in tireless monotony, and huge trees praying and howling to the wroth of the wind, and frisky brutes gamboling in wild frolics, and Indians skulking in stealthy moods, is something awe-inspiring.

On a jolly morning, Charles Mann, the pioneer merchant of Fir, reconnoitered in the woods behind his store, and to his awe, stumbled into a hideous infernal, which was afterwards discovered to be an Indian cemetery. Ah, terror! hundreds of Indians were hanging in the trees, some nude skeletons, some with the hearts torn out of their mutilated frames; owls and crows were sailing on evil wings among the ghastly dead, and horror seemed to reign in every bush. This finding startled the whole town, and into the woods rushed young and old; flames sprang into the air and swept through the forest, and the dead Indians dropped from a hanging hell into a burning one.

The flood of 1887 spread consternation throughout the

community. The water leaped down from the mountains in savage fury and scattered the dykes to the briny billows, busy hugging the beach below. Houses set sailing down the valley in tipsy joltings, and logs went chasing each other in mad bewilderment for the sea. The deluge broke into Mann's store and rose to the depth of three feet. Mr. Mann was alone in the store, and to drive away loneliness grabbed the fish line and commenced angling, caught two mountain trouts by the counter. During the same flood Mrs. Mann was sitting in the Fir Hotel chatting with some friends, and before they were aware of the enormity of the water they went sailing on their chairs around the room.

In and around Fir live a number of Scandinavians who have witnessed frontier encounters, but their early struggles have become pleasing revels for a fanciful imagination, as the late years have crowned their efforts with success. Olof Polson, a son of Sweden, and at present mayor of La Conner, was along with the first brigade of pioneers that scattered themselves in the valley. Ole Lonke, born in Norway, and a prosperous farmer, about a mile from Fir, located here over twenty years ago. Ole Johnson, also a native of Norway, has resided here over two decades, and Peter Olson dates his arrival still further back.

Among the more recent settlers who have proved valuable exponents are: John Hanson, August Johnson, Even Handstad, John Kragues, Ole Kvande, Knut Lange, Sivert



Sande, Ole Olson, Lars Engen, G. O. Branstad, Lars and Nils Danielson and Elik Johnson.

Proceeding up the river we find many Scandinavian pioneers who rank among the most prominent citizens; viz., Peter Egtvet, Ole N. Lee, Frank Tollefson and Magnus Anderson. At Skagit City, N. Erickson, Alfred, Edwin and Herman Johnson are representative farmers who have spared no time for the upbuilding of the country. Rev. John Johnson, presiding elder of the Swedish Methodist church, who resides at this place, is a noted man, being a gifted rhetorician and an able pulpit orator.

To the east of this happy village spreads out a fertile plain which sweeps up into a proud elevation, called Pleasant Ridge, the home of the old pioneer, Charles John Chilberg, and two of his sons, Isaac and James. Here we find also a number of other Scandinavians who have shared the burden of early struggles.

Four miles up the river from Skagit City stands the jolly city of Mt. Vernon, which has within its boundary many prominent men from the shores of Norway and Sweden. The two leading merchants of the city are Norwegians—Louis Foss and N. J. Moldstad.

Louis Foss is well known throughout the Pacific country, being the first Scandinavian state senator in Washington. He was born in Norway, 1849, received a liberal education, graduated from college at nineteen, and shortly after emigrated to America, locating in Wisconsin. He worked four years as



LOUIS FOSS.

scaler of logs on Chippewa river; went to the Dakota Black Hills during the excitement of 1875, where he remained two years working in the mines. From whence he went to Zumbrota, Minnesota, to assume the management of a large merchandise store, in which capacity he labored faithfully for five years. His name had acquired a favorable clang among the people and the city of Fosston was christened to his honor. In 1887 he disposed of his interests in Minnesota and moved to Tacoma, Washington, where he engaged in real estate, and entered mercantile business at Mt. Vernon and Buckley. Five years later he was elected state senator from Pierce county, and served his state with honor for four years. At the expiration of his senatorship he removed with his family to Mt. Vernon, where he now resides, and owns a big mercantile establishment, The Fair. He has also a large store of similar kind in Anacortes which his eldest son is managing. Mr. Foss is not only a man of business aptitude, but also a man of character, fidelity and honor.

N. J. Moldstad merits the appellation of "progressive business man." He was born in Vestre Toten, Norway, April 1, 1863, where he obtained his early education. July 2, 1876, he sailed for America, settling at De Forest, Wisconsin, and shortly after entered his brother's dry goods store. His next move was to Lanesborough, Minnesota, where he secured a clerkship with a big mercantile firm, afterwards assumed a similar vocation in Minneapolis. From whence he turned his attention to North Dakota, embarking in store



N. J. MOLDSTAD.

and banking business for himself. The Pacific had become a fascinating field, sold out, and crossed the Rocky, locating in Tacoma, where he established a shoe store. Another journey seemed to emphasize business progress, disposed of his establishment in Tacoma and engaged in dry goods and clothing in Mt. Vernon. The last years he has also given due consideration to the Alaska gold fields, being interested in several claims around Dawson. In 1893 he took a trip to Europe, traveled in England, France, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. In 1898 he was married to an estimable lady in Mt. Vernon, and spent his honeymoon journeying in California, the Southern states and New York, visited Washington and shook hands with President McKinley. On returning took in Chicago and other large cities. Mr. Moldstad is a republican in politics and has been delegate to county and state conventions, but has scoffed at the idea of seeking any office. He is like Mr. Louis Foss, of the same city, in being a true gentleman, respected and respectable.



A MUSICIAN ON SKAGIT RIVER.