

## Ormund Westley

Ormund Westley was born in Jaderon, Norway, April 18, 1863. At 11 o'clock P.M. April 9, 1881 he and a company of twenty six, with Betual Herigstad as leader, left Norway. They went on board a small steanship, Johan Sverdrup, and set their course for England.

The trip across the North Sea was quite rough and many of the company started to "feed the crabs". In a couple of days they landed in New Castle, England. When they got on ground again, it were as if the whole town were swaying and the whole company walked as though they were drunk.

Across the harbor was the little city of Shields and to Mr. Westley it looked like fire and smoke, there were so many industries and factories. They stopped in New Castle just a short time and then boarded the train across England for Liverpool. The company's tickets were entrusted to Herigstad's care and in some mishap in leaving the boat, the tickets were forgotten and he entered the train with his charges having no ticket. The coaches were in small compartments and the company occupied several of these, Mr. Herigstad being in the front coach. When the conductor came to the windows for their tickets, they just pointed ahead, and in this way they crossed England without a single ticket.

Getting off the train in Liverpool, they were taken to the immigrant house by the Line officers and police. On the second section of that train was a man by the name of Tensing, from Sand, Norway and the tickets were sent with him. This was a great relief to Mr. Westley and the rest, for it looked as if they were going to jail.

The landscape of England from New Castle to Liverpool was very beautiful and they could see a great deal as it was full moonlight all the time, almost like day.

In Liverpool they stayed two days waiting for the steamer of the

White Star line to take them across the Atlantic ocean, but there again they were fooled and were put on board a three thousand ton ship, Palmyra, when they should have gone with one of the best boats of the White Star Line. Liverpool was a very busy seaport and the contrast between rich and poor was very evident on every hand.

There is one special thing Mr. Westley remembers. Four boys had a big two-wheeled cart loaded with coal, and a small donkey between the shafts pulling the load. All went fine until they got to a hill. The donkey pulled with all his might, but all at once the heavy cart lifted the donkey off the ground and his feet went like drum sticks pawing the air, until two boys on each side pulled him down to the ground.

Their waiting in Liverpool was soon over and they were loaded in the ship Palmyra, to tackle the Atlantic ocean. On the way out they came close to the coast of Ireland and a small ship brought them a supply of soft water.

The next four days everything went fine. The weather was nice and it was fine sailing. But the fifth day their propellor broke. The ship shook in the back and the men's dinner was interrupted, dishes and food going in all directions. For the next twenty minutes there was a real calamity on board the ship and the life boats were loosened. They did not know whether they were going to sink or if they were all right.

Distress flags went up on every mast and all over the rigging. About 4 P.M. the same day a big steamer of the White Star line bore down on them. Mr. Westley said he had never seen a more beautiful sight when the green painted boat came near. The white foam and sprays of water were thrown to each side and it looked like they were going to cut the other boat in two. The captains conversed with each other for a few minutes and were soon sailing away. The decks of both ships were

packed with people, all waving handkerchiefs. In one hour they saw no more of the big ship. A short time after another ship bore down on them and took them aboard. The first two cables broke when they started up but the new ones they used held.

It was five days until they were anchored in the harbor of St. John, Newfoundland. Newfoundland in many ways is very much like Norway, with mountains, birch trees, etc., and along the shore line in the city of St. John was a sort of market place where women sold all kinds of fish.

The first two or three days anyone could go ashore for a few pennies. Small boats surrounded the ship. Most of the crew on the ship went ashore and came back late in the evening, drunk. Sailors and immigrants started the worst fight Mr. Westley ever witnessed, but the officers with drawn revolvers finally succeeded in restoring order around 2 o'clock in the morning. After that no one was allowed to go ashore except the ship's officers.

After staying in the harbor of St. John nine days, their ship started for New York, the journey taking them almost five days. In New York they were taken into the Castle garden and arranged in two lines to take their turn to find their baggage and the custom officers looked their baggage over. Right in front of Mr. Westley stood a big Swede who went out of line two times and tried it the third time. The policeman shoved him back and was going to hit him. The Swede ducked, and Mr. Westley being right behind him got the blow over his left shoulder, and could see stars in the sunshine.

Just as soon as the custom officers were ready they were put on the immigrant train onto Chicago. There the Westleys and some of the others had relatives whom they stayed with three days. Mr. Westley and his friends had rides in the street cars all over the city of

Chicago, the street car being drawn by horses in those days.

Again they boarded the train and for St. Paul, Minn. where they stayed awhile in the immigrant house. Their tickets took them to Granite Falls, Minn. where they had many friends. Some of the company settled around there for good, and many were bound for Dakota territory to get some of the free homesteads. Nine of the company started for Devils Lake including Ole H. Westley, O.M. Westley, Betual Herigstad, Carl Herigstad, Knut Haaland, Sven Loge, Waldemar Klubben, Christian Aarestad, and Martin Ueland (who joined them in Valley City), with Christian Aarestad as leader. There were nine oxen and two covered wagons and each brought their few belongings along.

They drove as far as Benson, Minn. where they shipped their belongings to Fargo, the end of the Great Northern tracks. From there they followed the Northern Pacific railroad to Valley City. Leaving Valley City they could see that there were very few settlers and far between. Finally June 17, they stayed near the bluffs on the Sheyenne river. This was a Sunday afternoon and one of the company saw a sod house not far away. They decided to stay there and look for homesteads. The surveyors were camping by the Sheyenne river, and some of the land was staked up and given section names and quarter markings.

Sven Loge was the first to locate a homestead. He selected some rather rough land by the river, and as there was some fine oak timber they all helped build his log house. Two of the stumps were right in the house and were handy for seats and chopping blocks.

It took about three weeks before they all had found land. Mr. Westley filed on Sec. 20, Sverdrup Twp.

In the meantime they slept under the wagon covers, dishes and kitchen utensils mostly standing around on the ground. Their bread being used up, they had to try making bread. None of them knew how.

One evening Sven Loge took a big bread pan, mixed flour and water to a thin soup, and put one yeast cake in to raise the soup. The next morning Mr. Westley was told to make this up to bread and bake it. All of the others were busy looking for land and working at something. Mr. Westley had seen his mother make bread, so he started to do the best he could. Before he got the dough so it could be handled, he had used about one-half sack of flour, and filled every pan with dough and formed the bread. When baked, the crust was about an inch thick and the rest of it almost slid to the ground. The stove was standing in the open and as the damper was down, Mr. Westley fired until the flames stood a foot out of the two stovepipe lengths, and the bread was just baked on one side. After firing and turning the pans all day, the bread was baked by the time the folks got home in the evening. This one baking lasted nine men one week, and bread and coffee was about all they had.

The next thing was to break up their land and build their sod houses. As there was just two breaking plows for the nine of them, they worked on the cooperative plan, breaking up about five acres for each party. In time all of them had this done and their sod houses built. The Westley's was a dug out in the hill. One end was dug in so far they could almost step on the roof from the ground.

The butter they had bought in Valley City some five or six weeks before, had given out, likewise all other provisions. Mr. Westley and his father while building, had nothing to eat but dry bread and slough water, strained through a new straw hat to get the bugs out.

In the month of August, C. Aarestad and Mr. Westley went back to Granite Falls. Mr. Westley's mother, brothers, and sisters didn't know him when they first saw him, as he was going bare headed most of the time, and the overalls and jacket he wore were four sizes too big for

him. He worked for Kaalhei and Johnson near Granite Falls. The next spring the rest of the men in Dakota got work around Valley City. They all stayed on their homesteads during the winter.

In November, 1881 Mr. Westley's father came to Granite Falls. In the latter part of the winter, all his brothers and sisters got Typhoid fever and one sister died. In the spring while working for Kaalhei, Mr. Westley was taken sick with the fever and in bed for one month.

In the spring of 1882 there was a great flood in Dakota. The river was so high, the settlers didn't dare go across to get provisions and all were close to starvation. A Scotchman by the name of Chalmers, had previously bought potatoes and killed an oxen to keep the family alive through the winter.

In May, 1882 Mr. Westley bought two oxen and one cow, and some oxen and cows for the rest of the men in Dakota. The whole family then started for Dakota territory in the covered wagon for the second time.

There were no schools, churches, or grave yards when Mr. Westley first came to Dakota. Mrs. Jens Bull was the first one who died in Bald Hill township, 1884.

A congregation was soon organized. Mr. Westley's father, Ole taught a parochial school in 1882-1883. It was held mostly in the home of Mr. Westley.

Mr. Westley took a homestead of his own on section 10, Greenfield township, in 1885. He was the first to build a lumber house in the country.

May 18, 1886 he married Melina Jenson by Rev. Nessheim at Jens Bull's home in Bald Hill township. Eight children were born to this marriage.

Mr. Westley stayed on the farm until 1906 when he moved to Cooperstown and went into politics. He was elected Register of Deeds and held that position four years.

In 1909 he worked three months as deputy, for Martin Garlid in Cooperstown, and then moved to Hannaford where for seventeen years he worked in the Farmers State Bank. He is now residing with his wife in Hannaford and at present takes any job he can get.