

Karinestova: A piece of Norwegian history for Syttende Mai

BY DARRELL HOVLAND

My name is Darrell Hovland and as you can probably tell from my last name, I am of Norwegian heritage. In fact, all of my relatives came from Norway.

On my father's side they came from an island in Norway called Bømlø. It is about 45 minutes away from Bergen by boat. The specific community in Bømlø where they're from is called Hovland, which is a township. Bømlø is an island and is connected to the mainland via the Bømløbrua Bridge and the Bømløfjord Tunnel. The size of the island is 66 square miles; population is over 12,000. Bømlø today has industries of fishing, boating, trading posts, gold mines and tourism.

The main industries in Bømlø years ago were fishing, mason work and farming, although the farms in Norway are quite different than what we have in North Dakota. The farms were also referred to as gardens (rural farm), and they raised vegetables, fruits and livestock feed. The average farm in Norway is 16 acres. Farms had from one to a few cows, chickens, pigs, goats, sheep and maybe a horse or two.

In order to survive, people had to have several sources of income, so besides farming they fished and had other side jobs. The climate in Bømlø is mild due to trade winds from the Gulf of Mexico. Most times in the winter you only need a shovel for snow removal.

This story is about the house where my grandfather, Severin Hovland, was raised in along with his seven brothers and how and why this house is now a museum. The story also tells how seven of the eight brothers emigrated to America and became successful farmers.

The story begins in 1811 when Paul Aadenes Lonningnes became the owner of the farm on which the house stands. Paul bought the farm from Nils Olsen Vold on the condition that he marry Nils's stepdaughter, Marithe Andersdotter. Paul agreed to this and the purchase price was 200 Riksdalar.

A marriage such as this seems a little strange, but at that time access to land was so important that one could agree to such conditions. Strange as it is, apparently Paul and Marithe got along well together as they had a total of nine children. However, only three boys grew

up to adulthood.

Paul was 23 years old in 1811 when he bought the farm at Hovland. He ran the farm until 1838 and was then 50 years old. He built a small house for himself and Marithe, and the house was nicknamed Padlastovo. It was common back then to name your house.

The living room part of the house is timber. In the northeast part of the house is a combined entrance area and kitchen. There is a large fireplace and some kitchen cupboards are placed on the floor along one wall. Open shelving hangs on two of the walls. Along the north side of the house, a loft has been built for storage and was also where the children slept. I do not know the dimensions of the house, but it was very small for a large family.

Paul and Marithe lived in Padlastovo until they died, he in 1860 and she in 1875. One of their sons, Anders, then took over the house and lived there until he died in 1883.

New people then moved into Padlastovo. Johannes G. Gudmonson (born Aug. 16, 1840), who was my great-grandfather. Johannes came to the area of Hovland as a boy from Vandaskog in Sveio. There was good spring herring fishing at the end of the 19th century, so fisher farmers did well.

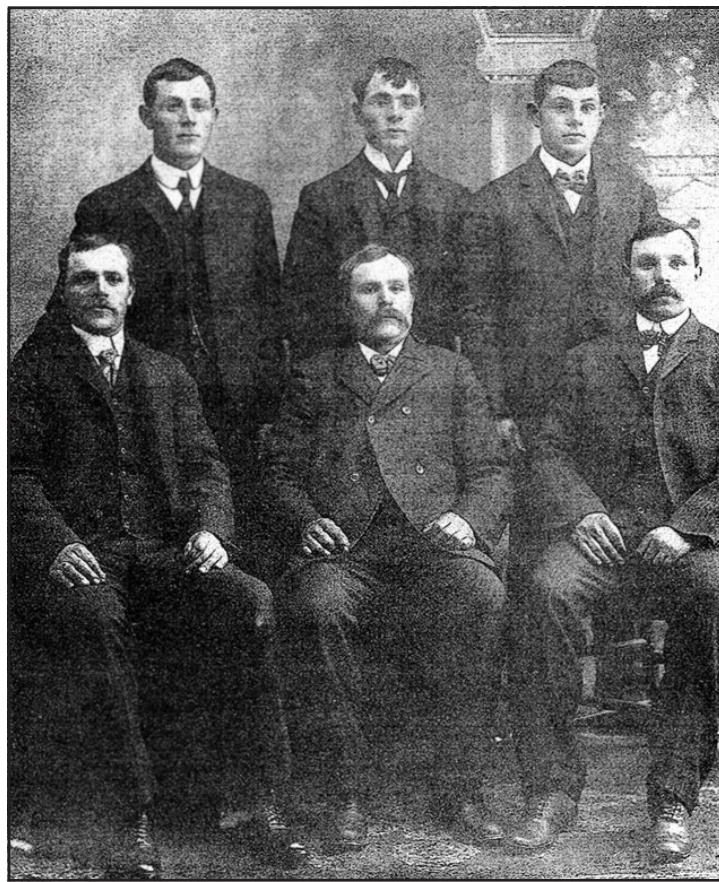
Johannes was married to Karine Oldstr Lonning (born Feb. 14, 1850), my great-grandmother. Johannes worked as an earth and stone worker and Karine had occasional jobs in the fields. Padlastova got a new nickname and was now called Karinestova (Karine's house).

A common practice at the time was for people to take their surname after the place where they lived, so the name Gudmonson was changed to Hovland. We have found that Hovland is a very common name in Norway.

Johannes and Karine had eight boys and despite the cramped and miserable conditions in the tiny living room, they all grew up. The boys were Ole John, Martin, Anton, Severin, Reinert, Matt, Christ and Johannes.

The firstborn son, John, was born Sept. 18, 1871, and the youngest, Johannes, was born July 22, 1892, so there were 21 years between the oldest and youngest boy; thus not everyone lived at home at the same time.

It was the custom back then



Six of the seven Hovland brothers who went to America. Front: Martin Gustav, Ole Johan, Anton Kornelius. Back: Vilhelm Severin, Hans Mathias, Reinert Andreas.

that when a boy reached his teens, he would be loaned out to learn a trade. Seven of the brothers emigrated to America and learned to be farmers. More on this later.

The youngest son, Johannes, did not go to America. Instead he built a large house on Hovland and took his parents with him from Karinestova when he moved into the new house. This was in 1917. This house is still lived in.

As far as is known, no people lived in Karinestova after this. Johannes Gudmonson died Dec. 1, 1919, and Karine died April 27, 1922.

It was a practice in Norway back then that when the owners of a farm grew old and could no longer manage the farm, they would hand over the operation to the eldest of their children in exchange for the care of them until their death. This was recorded in a letter of terms and was registered with the court clerk and so was a public document binding for both parties. Now it is different; the government takes over the care of older people with social security, home care, housing, retirement

and nursing homes.

The youngest son, Johannes, married Anna Aanensdtr Tollevik and together they had two boys, Johan and Aanen.

Johan had two boys, John Arne and Trygve, and a girl, Eva. Aanen had two girls, Annborge and Asa, and a son, Jan. These are my cousins. In 2019 my wife Linda, my sister Arlyss Bergerud and I went to Norway and met all our relatives and viewed the houses. It was a very emotional and overwhelming experience meeting all these wonderful people who are of the same blood as you but whose lives are half a world away from you. Our regret is that we did not schedule enough time to visit and share stories with them more.

After Johannes and Karine moved out, the house Karinestova now stood empty and was used for a time for storing mink fur and sometimes sheep. At other times it was used as a gathering place for the men at Hovland in the mornings every Sunday. They would sit and talk about the happenings in Hovland.

Karinestova's condition grad-



Johannes, who stayed in Norway. No photo was available of the eighth brother, John Christian.

ually got worse and worse. The plan was to demolish it but some thought it was a shame that a house with so much history should be lost. The Husmorlaget and the Fishermen's Association took over the house and restored it into a small museum. It is now safe and remains as a beautiful memory from the past.

Karinestova has now stood at Hovland for around 186 years and is probably one of the oldest houses in Bømlø. It is definitely a treasure.

There was not a lot of opportunities for a young man in Norway as available land for farming was very scarce. You could be a fisherman or work for someone. So the lure of America was very strong as the opportunities in America for a better life were many. You could also find land for farming there, so the Hovland brothers decided they would set course for the land "over there," one after the other.

How the immigration process worked was you entered America at Ellis Island. You had to have a sponsor and had to be able to prove you could provide for yourself and would not be a burden to the public.

From Ellis Island everyone traveled to the "Norwegian" areas in America -- North Dakota, Minnesota and Montana. Here there was enough land for everyone to become a farmer. But as there was actually very little farming in Norway, immigrants had to learn the trade of farm-

ing, so once they left Ellis Island they would go to prosperous farms in Minnesota and North Dakota to learn the trade.

One of these prosperous farms in Minnesota was owned by my other great-grandfather, Nils Vigen, and it was located in Stony Brook Township in Grant County, Minn. It is in the Elbow Lake, Fergus Falls area. Research shows that many Norwegians went through Stony Brook Township and many of them settled in Wells County, specifically the Wellsburg, Heimdal and Manfred areas.

In 1891 the first two Hovland brothers to travel to America were John and Martin. After they arrived in America and after they made some money, they would send tickets to another brother in Norway to come over. In this way, the oldest sent tickets to the younger until everyone had left Norway -- except for the youngest brother, Johannes, who chose to stay in Norway.

John and Martin came through Ellis Island, then to Stony Brook Township, then to the Hatton area where they worked for farmers. In 1894 they both homesteaded in the Wellsburg area, 160 acres each. Their land joined each other's.

To homestead you needed to build a house on the property, so they built a little house on the dividing line of their properties. You also had to improve the property by planting trees.

In 1899 John built a farmstead on his property located on the east side of Wellsburg. A large nice house, barn, granary, chicken house and machine shed were built. He also planted a huge grove of trees surrounding the farmstead which included berry and fruit trees. The farmstead and buildings are still standing today and belong to his grandson Jerry. This farm is 120 years old.

John married Bertha Vik in 1892; they had 10 children. John died on Jan. 1, 1925; Bertha died on March 3, 1948.

An interesting story about John: In 1911, he went back to Norway for a visit, and he planned to return to America on a ship called the *Titanic*. But because of a delay he missed the ship. Turned out to be his lucky day!

Martin Hovland built a big house on his farmstead southeast of Wellsburg. He also

Continued on page B2

15691 ABSTRACT OF STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023

Gainbridge Life Insurance Company In the state of Delaware	
Total Assets	177,442,663
Total Liabilities	117,401,502
Aggregate write-ins for special surplus funds	241,991
Common Capital Stock	3,000,000
Preferred Capital Stock	0
Aggregate write-ins for other than special surplus funds	0
Surplus notes	0
Gross paid in and contributed surplus	49,700,000
Unassigned funds	7,099,170
Total capital and surplus	60,041,161
Total Liabilities, Capital and Surplus	177,442,663

NORTH DAKOTA BUSINESS ONLY FOR THE YEAR 2023

Total Life and Annuity Premiums Written	0
Total Life and Annuity Direct Losses Paid	0
Total Accident & Health Direct Premiums Written	0
Total Accident & Health Direct Losses Paid	0

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE

I, Jon Godfread, Commissioner of Insurance of the State of North Dakota, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true Abstract of Statement, as officially filed by the Company in this office.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of this office at Bismarck, the first day of May, A.D. 2024. (SEAL)

JON GODFREAD
Commissioner of Insurance
STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE
COMPANY'S CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, the above corporation duly organized under the laws of its state or country of domicile, has filed in this office a sworn statement exhibiting its condition and business for the year ending December 31, 2023 conformable to the requirements of the laws of this State regarding the business of insurance and

WHEREAS, the said company has filed in this office a duly certified copy of its charter with certificate of organization in compliance with the requirements of insurance law aforesaid,

NOW THEREFORE, I, JON GODFREAD, Commissioner of Insurance of the State of North Dakota, pursuant to the provisions of said laws, do hereby certify that the above named company is fully empowered through its authorized agents and representatives, to transact its appropriated business of authorized insurance in the state according to the laws thereof, until the 30th day of April, A.D. 2025.

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JON GODFREAD
Commissioner of Insurance
(Publish May 2, 9 & 16, 2024)

60230 ABSTRACT OF STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023

Farmers Life Insurance Company In the state of Tennessee	
Total Assets	306,792,604
Total Liabilities	286,877,046
Aggregate write-ins for special surplus funds	0
Common Capital Stock	1,000,000
Preferred Capital Stock	21,500
Aggregate write-ins for other than special surplus funds	0
Surplus notes	0
Gross paid in and contributed surplus	21,478,500
Unassigned funds	-2,584,442
Total capital and surplus	19,915,558
Total Liabilities, Capital and Surplus	306,792,604

NORTH DAKOTA BUSINESS ONLY FOR THE YEAR 2023

Total Life and Annuity Premiums Written	1,964,903
Total Life and Annuity Direct Losses Paid	50,797
Total Accident & Health Direct Premiums Written	0
Total Accident & Health Direct Losses Paid	0

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(Publish May 2, 9 & 16, 2024)

62880 ABSTRACT OF STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023

Equitable Financial Life and Annuity Company In the state of Colorado	
Total Assets	560,544,179
Total Liabilities	414,980,133
Aggregate write-ins for special surplus funds	2,820,538
Common Capital Stock	2,500,000
Preferred Capital Stock	0
Aggregate write-ins for other than special surplus funds	0
Surplus notes	0
Gross paid in and contributed surplus	181,346,501
Unassigned funds	-41,405,648
Total capital and surplus	145,261,391
Total Liabilities, Capital and Surplus	560,241,524

NORTH DAKOTA BUSINESS ONLY FOR THE YEAR 2023

Total Life and Annuity Premiums Written	11,867
Total Life and Annuity Direct Losses Paid	10,581
Total Accident & Health Direct Premiums Written	0
Total Accident & Health Direct Losses Paid	0

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63053 ABSTRACT OF STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023

Family Life Insurance Company In the state of Texas	
Total Assets	138,488,930
Total Liabilities	108,503,427
Aggregate write-ins for special surplus funds	0
Common Capital Stock	5,000,000
Preferred Capital Stock	0
Aggregate write-ins for other than special surplus funds	0
Surplus notes	0
Gross paid in and contributed surplus	15,872,207
Unassigned funds	9,113,296
Total capital and surplus	29,985,503
Total Liabilities, Capital and Surplus	138,488,930

NORTH DAKOTA BUSINESS ONLY FOR THE YEAR 2023

Total Life and Annuity Premiums Written	2,385
Total Life and Annuity Direct Losses Paid	0
Total Accident & Health Direct Premiums Written	69,986
Total Accident & Health Direct Losses Paid	28,244

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(Publish May 2, 9 & 16, 2024)

63088 ABSTRACT OF STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023

Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company In the state of Iowa	
Total Assets	9,795,112,896
Total Liabilities	9,065,927,613
Aggregate write-ins for special surplus funds	0
Common Capital Stock	2,500,000
Preferred Capital Stock	0
Aggregate write-ins for other than special surplus funds	0
Surplus notes	0
Gross paid in and contributed surplus	130,982,867
Unassigned funds	595,702,416
Total capital and surplus	729,185,283
Total Liabilities, Capital and Surplus	9,795,112,896

NORTH DAKOTA BUSINESS ONLY FOR THE YEAR 2023

Total Life and Annuity Premiums Written	10,528,272
Total Life and Annuity Direct Losses Paid	7,709,944
Total Accident & Health Direct Premiums Written	17,599
Total Accident & Health Direct Losses Paid	14,242

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63223 ABSTRACT OF STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023

Federal Life Insurance Company In the state of Illinois	
Total Assets	319,335,507
Total Liabilities	263,716,696
Aggregate write-ins for special surplus funds	0
Common Capital Stock	2,500,000
Preferred Capital Stock	0
Aggregate write-ins for other than special surplus funds	0
Surplus notes	0
Gross paid in and contributed surplus	48,050,000
Unassigned funds	5,068,811
Total capital and surplus	55,618,811
Total Liabilities, Capital and Surplus	319,335,507

NORTH DAKOTA BUSINESS ONLY FOR THE YEAR 2023

Total Life and Annuity Premiums Written	1,145
Total Life and Annuity Direct Losses Paid	0
Total Accident & Health Direct Premiums Written	110,560
Total Accident & Health Direct Losses Paid	6,444

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