

A NOTE ON THIS ISSUE

This is an important year for Norwegians in America. One hundred and fifty years ago, a tiny, single-masted sloop named "Restauration" arrived in New York harbor on October 9, 1825. The small vessel was three months out of Stavanger with a party of ten families and twelve unmarried men aboard. They were the first Norwegian immigrants to settle in America, and the sesquicentennial of their arrival is being celebrated this year by a series of events across the country—ranging from Liv Ullman's appearance on Broadway in a new production of Ibsen's A Doll's House to the visit of His Majesty Olav V, King of Norway, to the United States. The King is scheduled to visit Decorah, Iowa on October 14.

Northeastern Iowa—especially the region in and around Decorah—has long been a center of Norwegian culture in America. The many immigrants who settled there have done much to preserve reminders of their European origins. One of the foremost examples of such efforts was Symra, a literary periodical published in the Norwegian language in Decorah during the decade just before World War I. It is generally acknowledged to have been the best among a considerable number of such periodicals. By 1907, the editorial committee of Symra had evolved into a literary society, meeting fortnightly in the homes of members for dinner, cigars, and discussion of scholarly papers. Members were drawn from the editorial staff of the

Norwegian-American publishing firm of Anundsen, from the faculty of Luther College, and from the business and professional community of Decorah. The War killed the periodical by cutting off subscribers in Norway, but Symra Society survived and has continued to flourish until the present day. Its membership has been limited by tradition to 25 men, nearly all of whom have descended from Norwegian forebears, and its activities today are much the same as they always have been.

As the anniversary year approached, the Symra Society made plans to commemorate both the one hundred fiftieth year of Norwegian immigration and the seventieth anniversary of the Symra periodical. The following issue of The Palimpsest is the result of those plans. Professor J. R. Christianson, a member of modern-day Symra and a history teacher at Luther College, has been the unofficial sub-editor and chief contributor for this issue, a project undertaken by the Division of the State Historical Society in cooperation with Symra. Professor Christianson's brief discussion of Vesterheim, the Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, highlights an institution which has become the focus of much of the immigrant heritage. The story of Luren depicts an important and characteristic part of Norwegian social life, and Andrew Veblen's memoir of his years at Luther College gives a nineteenth-century glimpse of that bulwark of education among Norwegian-Americans.