

The SURVIVORS OF the S/S NORGE

September 1999 - Debbie Dahl-Cole & Tom Solberg - The Alexandria Post, Thursday 21 July 1904

The following article was transcribed and submitted by Debbie Dahl-Cole. She have not changed the spelling of any of the person's names, although mistakes have been made in the article. All of the people mentioned in the article are Debbie's relatives. Tom Solberg who is also related to these people furnished the article. Tom Solberg is a genealogist for the Douglas County Historical Society in Minnesota.

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SURVIVORS OF NORGE

Mr. And Mrs. Helmer Fosmo, survivors of the Ill Fated Vessel, Arrive in Minnesota

Fossmo Tells a Thrilling Story of the Wreck-Rescue of Self and Wife

The wreck of the illfated Danish steamship Norge, on a rock of the north coast of Scotland on June 28, was slipping from the memory of Alexandria when it was vividly brought to their mind by the arrival in Alexandria of two of the survivors. Helmer Jonson Fosmo is a nephew of Mrs. Johannes Hokanson of this village and of Andrew Baglo, of Garfield. Some time ago Fosmo wrote from the old country to his uncle for assistance to reach this country. Mrs. Hokanson bought a ticket of the First national bank and sent it to the young man.

The Rev. H.A. Benson interviewed the young man and interpreted the story to a Post news reporter. The story as told by Fosmo is as follows:

I and my bride, Karen Hansdatter Fosmo are each 21 years of age. We were married June 16 at Gronysfosaensge, Norway and as we were in great haste to get to America I wrote to my uncle Andrew Baglo of Garfield, for help to reach here. He sent me one ticket. I scraped enough together to buy a ticket for my wife. We left Christiana June 24, at seven a.m. on the steamship Norge, bound for America. There were about seven hundred passengers on board. We arrived at Christiansund the same evening. Remained there until Saturday, June 25. Sailed from that point about nine a.m. that day. We sailed north of Scotland. The sky remained clear until Tuesday morning. That morning about seven o'clock, while we were yet in bed, we were aroused by a rumbling grating noise, as of heavy chains being rolled across the deck. It was not so much of a shock or crash. We were frightened and hurried on deck to see what had happened. A few had arrived before us. They had begun lowering boats. I left my wife on second deck and ran back to get life preservers. I was fortunate enough to reach my wife with two life preservers, although by this time the people were striving to get out the boats, and in the scramble one of the preservers was taken away from me. We reached the upper deck, where the boats were, before the throng. There was one continuous prayer going up from the crowd. When we reached the deck three or four boats had been launched and broken against the vessel. One boat was launched with but few in it. One Swedish woman threw her five year old daughter into the boat and jumped after her. Some successful in making the boat, while others went down in the waves. We were among the fortunate ones. The boat was heaped full, twenty-seven lying in the bottom in a pile. The boat was thrown against the side of the vessel and the stern injured then it was carried away on the waves. We strived then as best we could to arrange ourselves in such a way as to govern the boat and keep afloat but with so many that we were compelled to throw the life preservers overboard. We were piled on top of the oars in such a way that it was impossible to find more than one for some time. We were lucky enough to have with us one of the ship's officers and a Danish passenger who could assist in managing the boat. These two took command. Some were placed at the oars, which by this time had been secured, and others were set to bailing the boat with a pail and dipper which were found in it. We were twenty men, six women and a little girl.

We saw three other boats go from the wreck, but it was not long before the waves bore them away from us. We saw the passengers who had remained on the Norge, crowd to the stern of the ship, wring their hands. We watched for fifteen minutes when the ship carried its human load into the deep, and they were no more. We were on the ocean, all we could see were the waves. We continued to fight for our lives all day, in a rain and heavy sea. What little clothing we had on when we left the vessel was drenched with rain and sea water. The sky was clear and the night moonlight. Toward morning we saw what proved to be an English fishing vessel, the Sylvia. We made haste to signal them.

We had with us a sheet from one of the bunks in the vessel. One of the men had been in such haste to leave his bunk in the Norge, that he had become tangled in the sheet and had brought it with him. This we used as a signal

of distress.

At first the Sylvia took us for one of its own small boats which it had sent out to fish. When the people saw our signal they picked us up. We were treated very kindly by the captain and his people. They did all they could for us. Even the captain slept on the floor, giving up his bed to one of the women. They set their course toward where the wreck had occurred, but all we could see was a couple of bodies floating and trunks, women's hats, etc. After that the vessel returned to its station where it remained about twenty-four hours. I suppose waiting for its fishing boats. Then we sailed for the English shore arriving at Grumsby [Grimsby] about eight p.m. thursday. We remained on the boat until morning when we were taken to an emigrant hotel on shore. Here we were greatly helped by a Swedish sea missionary, and clothing was bought for us by a man. I think one of the councilmen of the town.

Monday we were taken to Liverpool by rail and Tuesday were put on board the **Cunard** Liner Sa_nia [**S/S Saxon**ia]. We were very kindly treated on board this vessel. A purse of \$100 was raised and divided among the survivors of the Norge. We arrived in Boston July 14 where another Swedish sea missionary helped us materially. We came by rail from there to Alexandria, arriving here Sunday night.

We lost everything we had. I am a shoemaker by trade and will make Alexandria, or some place near here, my home. It is a bad situation but I am going to do the best I can.

Fosmo and his bride are both strong hearty young people, but are handicapped by the fact that they are penniless and have barely enough clothing to cover their bodies. What renders their situation worse is that neither can speak English. They know nothing of work in this country, or of the customs of the land. The people of Moe have offered, it is said, to raise funds, equal to their passage money, if Fosmo would come out there and tell his story to the people of that town. The young man says he can not accept the invitation as he is not used to public speaking.

Fosmo and his bride are at the former aunt's Mrs. Hokanson's, where they will remain for a time. They will then visit an uncle in Garfield.