

# LATAH LEGACY

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**Dorthea Dahl: A Norwegian-American Voice in Idaho**

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**To Keep and Cultivate:  
Dorthea Dahl  
A Norwegian-American Voice  
in Idaho**

**Hilde Petra Brungot**

**Author's Foreword:** The purpose of this article is to introduce Dorthea Dahl by focusing on life in rural and small-town Idaho during the early twentieth century. Obviously, it is not a complete biography, but it does include a summary of her life prior to moving to Idaho and a sketch of her later years. I also wanted to explore how the typical themes in her fiction, developed in an Idaho setting depict the lives of first, second, and third-generation immigrants. I have included quotations from her letters, articles, and speeches in order to reflect the author's personal voice. In respect for this vivacious and profound personality, it is my sincere wish to allow Dorthea Dahl's own voice to permeate this article.



*First Lutheran Church confirmation class, 1903.  
People are not identified.*

Dorthea Dahl's own voice to permeate this article.

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Near the turn of the century stories began to drift back to the Middle West from a region on the other side of the Rocky Mountains. The wilderness had been tamed from Plymouth Rock to the banks of the Missouri and beyond. The life of the pioneer was changing its pattern, but the spirit of adventurousness that had driven the frontiersman ever westward was living in the hearts of the descendants in the second and third generations. A willing ear was given to reports of a vast empire lying on the other side of those stupendous mountains, an empire rich in all natural resources, dotted with wooded hillsides of matchless beauty. Furthermore, it was blessed with a climate that retained all the characteristics of the four seasons without any of their extremes.<sup>1</sup>

Dorthea Dahl wrote this picturesque description of recent pioneer experience during her days at a retirement home in Coeur d'Alene,

Idaho. In her lifetime she had witnessed incredible changes of physical and cultural environment and had actively contributed to integrating values of the past into modern American society. In fact, she may be viewed as an ideal immigrant, respectful of her Old World heritage, faithful to contemporary demands under continuously varying circumstances, and excited about promising changes for the future.

Moreover, as a self-conscious American she loyally supported her political leaders, while at the same time articulating clear criticism of federal actions which she found unfavorable to her local region. For reasons largely beyond her own control, Dorthea lived fifty-five years in Idaho, a part of the United States which she grew to appreciate highly.

From one perspective Dorthea Dahl represents millions of inhabitants whose names exist in statistical records but are otherwise merely remembered in private circles. As a dutiful woman, she accepted her responsibilities in supporting family, church, and community, but no scandal stains her name, and no

extraordinary success brought her fame.

At the time of her death, the obituaries in Moscow newspapers did not mention her writing career even though she had lived there for 48 years, whereas some church periodicals in the Midwest included brief references to her fiction.

From another point of view, the story of Dorthea's life, as well as the themes in her fiction, are worthy of study and may shed light on interesting aspects of immigrant history as well as on basic questions concerning 'the pursuit of happiness.'

In 1925 Dorthea was appointed State Chairman to represent Idaho at the Norwegian-American Centennial in Minneapolis, Minnesota, an event commemorating the first immigrants from Norway to the United States. As a member of a Scandinavian minority in Idaho she felt much honored, yet was fully aware that the office involved a considerable amount of work.

While organizing the collection of information and items from Norwegians around the state to illustrate their experiences, she expressed her frustrations with the situation in Idaho: "We have very few people here [in Idaho] of Norse descent. I dare say I could name the few really Norwegian settlements which exist in the state."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, as District Historian for her church's Women's Missionary Federation a few years later, she encountered scarce interest in the immigrant experience among Idaho women: "They do not see the romance of the old days at all and seem to recall nothing that they consider worth telling."<sup>3</sup>

Despite others' lack of interest in recent history, Dorthea's cultural and literary contributions reveal what she herself regarded as

'worth telling' about the past and worth preserving for the future. But she was not an escapist who wished to dwell in the past. Shortly after she had retired, she optimistically declared: "Life grows more and more interesting the older I grow. Activities take up my time; friends and relatives add joy to my existence. True, I am always short of money, but who isn't? I am never short of enjoyment and of interests in life."<sup>4</sup>

### Journey to America

Dorthea Dahl was born on March 20, 1881, at Osen, in the parish of Aamot, Østerdalen, a valley in eastern Norway, and immigrated to the United States with her family in 1883. Her parents, Lene (1839-1918) née Ulvevadet, and Peder Løssetosdalen (1846-1925) brought five daughters and two sons across the Atlantic, including Lene's three children from her first marriage. The family also

included Lene's oldest child, her married daughter, Oline, and Oline's two children. On their arrival, the family replaced Løssetosdalen with Dahl, which remained Dorthea's surname throughout her lifetime.

After their first year in Mayville, New York, and their next winter in Lac Qui and Parle County, Minnesota, Lene and Peder homesteaded in Lily, Day County, in what was then known as Dakota Territory. Other members of the extended family, together with neighbors from Norway, settled nearby, many of them in the town of Bradley, Clerk County. Dorthea grew up in this Midwest setting where Norwegian immigrants lived in a relatively homogeneous culture. Through hard work for their material well-being and with sincere concern for the building of church, school, and society, the settlers established a successful

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*Life grows more and more interesting the older I grow. Activities take up my time; friends and relatives add joy to my existence. True, I am always short of money, but who isn't? I am never short of enjoyment and of interests in life.*

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community on the prairie.<sup>5</sup>

### Church, Temperance, and Literature

The limited sources for intellectual activities gave the church a central position, and the Dahls helped organize their local church in the mid-1880s, shortly after they had settled in Lily. Lene's son Martinus was a student of the Norwegian

Lutheran United Church's Red Wing Seminary in Minnesota. He hoped to become a minister for that church but died of Hodgkin's Disease in 1889. Previously in 1887, Lene Dahl had founded their synod's first Ladies' Aid group, which helped support foreign missions, especially in Madagascar, where her sister Dorthea had previously served as a pioneer missionary for *Det Norske Misjonsselskap* [The Norwegian Mission Society] for twenty years.

Tutored by their mother in the Dakota farm house, the children became literate in the Norwegian language before they learned English at the public school. Dorthea immediately showed unusual interest in reading.

The founding of the *Syd Dakota Afholdsselskab* [South Dakota Temperance Society] in 1887 inspired Dorthea's cultural and political awareness and also resulted in encouragement for her writing.<sup>6</sup> Norwegian-American editor and author Waldemar Ager, a prominent spokesman for the temperance movement, became a family friend. He encouraged Dorthea to develop her potential for creative writing. According to Ager, encouragement was needed, since "[s]he was constantly fighting with her modesty and self-criticism and struggled hard 'not to'



*Looking south down Moscow's Main Street, ca. 1900. The photo is one half of a stereoptican view identified as taken by Olof P. Larsen of Squirrel, Idaho.*

write."<sup>7</sup>

As the youngest child she was expected to follow in her sisters' footsteps for teacher's training. However, a serious illness interrupted her studies at the State Normal School in Madison, South Dakota, which forced upon her a three-year recovery in the late 1890s. In September 1902, together with her sister Nellie (1879-1942), Dorthea registered at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota,

with special courses arranged for her.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, a new severe physical breakdown and recurring symptoms of the onset of tuberculosis forced her to leave college after less than a month in Northfield. Hoping for a successful rehabilitation for their youngest daughter in a drier climate, the family decided to join a group of migrants moving west beyond the Rocky Mountains.<sup>9</sup>

The choice to settle in Moscow, Idaho, was partly due to the Dahl's aspiring son-in-law, Eneval E. Ostroy, who had become a prospering wheat dealer in Bradley. Together with Dorthea's elder sister, Pauline, he was anxious to raise their children in a university town, an ambition shared by earlier immigrants who had decided to bring up their children in Moscow after the founding of the University of Idaho.<sup>10</sup>

Like South Dakota, Idaho was a young state when the group of Norwegian-Americans stepped off the train in Moscow in February 1903. The town had only been registered by that post office name for twenty-five years, and the whole state had undergone severe difficulties at the end of the 19th century. Even so, optimism and progress dominated the region in the early 1900s.

The University of Idaho was founded in Moscow on January 30, 1889, with an Agricultural College as well as a College of Letters and Science, though both were modest in size. Other departments were developing, offering classes in various subjects. Being the county seat of Latah County, Moscow was undergoing a rapid growth as the center for enterprises related to the farming and timber industries. "Various businesses were being opened in Moscow. Newcomers found a thriving, pleasant place to locate, with good schools and many churches," according to recollections of a pioneer merchant.<sup>11</sup>

A number of relatives and neighbors left South Dakota with the Dahls: "We were altogether thirty – that is to say when we include women and children. If these according to ancient customs should be excluded, the number would shrink to six."<sup>12</sup> The Temperance paper, *Reform*, published in Eau Claire, Wisconsin,

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*Moscow is a nice little town with large department stores, beautiful residences surrounded by magnificent trees.*

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regretfully reported the group's departure from South Dakota.

Among the several male migrants mentioned, the 22-year-old Dorthea is the only woman specifically referred to by name: "All these emigrants are prohibitionists and most of the adults are members of the 'Fram,' one of the most solid groups in our association. So as to give a faint impression of the loss we are going to

suffer through this migration, let me just mention three of the names: E. E. Ostroot, P. P. Dahl and Miss Dorthea Dahl. The latter has recently in a letter notified the Society's Secretary of her resignation from her position as Director of the Society."<sup>13</sup>

When the Dahl family arrived in Moscow in 1903, there were residents of many nationalities in the state, but only about one-fifth of the town's inhabitants were Scandinavians, even though an area on the east side of Main Street was known locally as Swede Town. Moscow appeared a striking contrast to their previous

local environment. The South Dakota settlement where they lived for nearly two decades was a Norwegian-American immigrant pocket dominated by newcomers from the Dahls' region in Norway.

The newly arrived Norwegian-Americans expressed excitement at the modern appearance of their new hometown: "Moscow is a nice little town with large



*Funeral cortege on Howard Street for Karinus Bue who died November 26, 1904. He was Berenice Dahl's grandfather. The house on the left, 318 Howard, was the Bue's. The middle house, 324 Howard, belonged to the Dahls. On the right is 412 Howard. All three houses are still there.*

department stores, beautiful residences surrounded by magnificent trees.” They immediately found many advantages in Moscow, which largely satisfied the great expectations the immigration agencies had created:

We would, as it were, go to a land, where the scent of flowers and the singing of birds filled the air, where the sun is shining without burning, where the snow is falling without the thermometer being brought under Zero, and where the rain is falling quietly and calmly without wind and without thunderstorms. Here are good schools and many churches. The Norwegian Lutheran Church has regular services with Sunday school, Youth League and Ladies Aid in addition to a choir.

The newcomers immediately set about establishing a temperance society in Moscow that spring. On May 13, 1903, a Midwest friend and temperance agitator, B. B. Haugan, visited the town, giving a speech to a well-attended audience in the Norwegian Lutheran church, and “at the end of the meeting the Temperance Society was organized.”<sup>14</sup>

Although Moscow was surrounded by rich farmland, Dorthea’s parents were too old to take up farming again. Peder, who was now 57, did part-time carpentry jobs in Moscow and volunteer work for the Lutheran church. Lena, seven years his senior, gradually needed extensive care as her physical strength, and eventually also her mental fitness, weakened.

They had a new house built at 324 Howard Street which became their home for the rest of

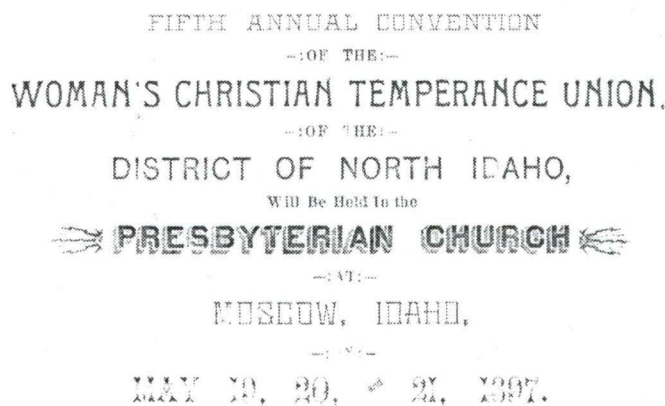
their lives and where Dorthea lived during her 48 years in Moscow. Eneval E. Ostroot established a successful real estate business in town and bought a house across the street from the Dahls. Lene’s son, Bertinus Luvaas, his wife, and their increasing number of children, sixteen in all, lived close by.<sup>15</sup> Thus the families continued their close relationship.<sup>16</sup> In addition to this cluster of family members, Lene’s daughter Oline and husband Johan Luvaas settled in Moscow and continued to live there, except for a temporary move to Spokane where their younger children attended school.

In Moscow the family joined Our Savior’s Church, a congregation of the United Norwegian Lutheran synod established two years before their arrival. In the coming years, the extended family became pillars of the development and consolidation of this church. The temperance society in Moscow did not appear to grow equally strong despite its optimistic beginning in 1903. Still, members of Dahl family continued to support this cause through subscriptions and contributions, and also by arranging reciting competitions in Norwegian, popularly known among the Norwegian Americans at the time as the Quale contest.<sup>17</sup>

In 1911 the Dahls’ friend from South Dakota, Waldemar Ager, who was speaking on behalf of the temperance cause, included Moscow in his tour of the West Coast. He found a “small but very attentive audience” at the meeting in the Norwegian church.

Afterwards, he paid a visit to the Dahls’ home, which Ager described in an article published in the

temperance publication, *Reform*: “I ended up in their home. The Dahl family was one of the strongest temperance families in South Dakota.”



*According to this program, the WCTU of North Idaho had been holding conferences since 1892. Sessions were held mornings, afternoons, and evenings for three days.*

He specifically referred to the youngest daughter, "Miss Dorthea, [who] as a very young girl was elected for the Society's board and has devoted a considerable amount of work both for the church and the temperance movement. She has read a large amount of fiction and her signature 'D. D.' is well known in periodicals which she has contributed to.

*Reform* has also had contributions from her."<sup>18</sup>

Dorthea commented about her signature in 1917: "In the beginning I used only my initials – D. D. – but later I have used my full name."<sup>19</sup> Dorthea evidently felt proud of her name and always retained the European version although periodicals occasionally anglicized the spelling into Dorothy.

As a young girl Dorthea Dahl's ambition for an education was first to qualify for foreign mission work and second to satisfy her desires for intellectual challenges. Because health problems prevented her from missionary work, she turned her attention to the temperance movement. An article published in 1926 described this change in her intellectual career: "Poor health thwarted her hopes of becoming a missionary, but she found some consolation in taking part in temperance work, a work in which she entered with the spirit of a crusader. She gave 'Temperance Readings' in the nearby school-houses and was at an early age honored by being given a place on the board of directors for the *Syd Dakota Totalafholdsselskab*."<sup>20</sup>

The articles and book reviews which Dorthea had submitted to Ager's paper, *Reform*, in South Dakota, were dominated by the agitating tone of voice typical of the movement. Dorthea continued to subscribe to *Reform* until it was discontinued after Ager's death in 1942, and she remained a teetotaler all her life.

However, over the years, in a different environment, she devoted her time and concern to other issues and expressed herself in a more independent and modified manner.

Throughout her childhood and youth Dorthea felt unusually close to her sister Nellie who was three years older. They were both inspired by interesting and amusing reports from their missionary aunt, Dortea Valen, in Madagascar. Dorthea explained that "[i]t was a missionary I wanted to be, and it was during my last attack of illness at the school that my sister Nellie,

who for several years had been a high school teacher in South Dakota, gave the promise that if I was allowed to become well, then she would go out in my place."<sup>21</sup>

In 1905 Nellie had completed her education and prepared to leave for her first term in Madagascar. The separation was an emotional moment for the entire family, as described by their father to Dortea Valen who had returned from her missionary work in Madagascar to Norway: "I shall never forget that moment as [Nellie] walked away down the street; having reached a point over at the market place she turned around and looked at her dear home. The other siblings and in-laws walked with her to the railway station and Dorthea accompanied her all the way to the city of Spokane 100 miles from here."<sup>22</sup>

### Making a Living and a Career

The Idaho climate turned out to have a good effect on Dorthea, whose health was considerably improved by 1909, after, as she described it, "all those years of semi-invalidism – or at least just dragging around. That period in



*Maurice Moody, a member of the Moscow Loyal Temperance Legion, signed this pledge in 1896, promising to abstain from alcoholic drinks, tobacco, and profanity.*





*Undated photograph of Dorthea Dahl.*

my life seemed to have been an entirely separate era from my later years.”<sup>23</sup>

During her first decade in Moscow she attended a business course in order to qualify for professional secretarial work. This was Dorthea's only formal education after having to abandon the aim of a college degree. Nellie and Dorthea had agreed that Nellie would do missionary work and Dorthea would remain in Moscow to support their parents, an exchange of roles with which both sisters were reconciled. “As it turned out [Nellie] became a much more able missionary than I could ever have been,” Dorthea proclaimed in later years.<sup>24</sup> Whether or not this statement holds true, Dorthea



*Standing outside the twelve-room Tweedt home near Genesee, this group poses for the photographer on Norwegian Independence Day in 1904. Hans Tweedt immigrated to the United States in 1866 and became a prominent landowner and county commissioner.*

certainly fulfilled her duties to her faith by serving her local Lutheran church in Moscow as well as the regional church in various capacities throughout her adult years.

Her church activities greatly helped Dorthea develop her abilities to communicate in the spoken and written form, by giving readings and speeches, and through numerous volunteer jobs as a secretary and reporter, as she modestly indicated in an autobiographical summary: “[I] became secretary for *Ungdomsforbundet* [The Young People's League] in our district in 1909. Took part in the programs several times.”<sup>25</sup> In addition, Dorthea contributed her musical talents to her church: “I also sang in the church choir throughout my youth, and played some on the piano and was also the organist in church for some years, and used to play for the Sunday school quite a lot.”<sup>26</sup>

Though loyal to her church, Dorthea fervently participated in debates concerning the burning issues in the Norwegian Lutheran church, especially the controversy over whether Norwegian or English be used in the service. Dahl advocated the values of the Norwegian culture and cherished this heritage as a meaningful cultural basis for her life.

Nevertheless, she was convinced that the great aspiration for the Lutheran church to thrive in the early 20th century could only be realized

if the young people could find the church meaningful. Therefore, it was paramount that the older members reconsider their priorities concerning the Norwegian language. In a speech at a church convention in the summer of 1909, Dahl listed numerous valid

arguments for her view:

The Young People's League should relate to this very important issue so that it uses the language through which the young people can best be kept in our church. In this matter should all prejudices, all preconceived opinions, and all purely personal considerations be laid aside, since it is not a question of which language we favour the most, Norwegian or English, but [a question] of which language that under the present circumstances is most suitable for consolidating our Lutheran Church in this country, so that it can survive when we lie in our graves. But one has to deal with it wisely, and one thing is for certain, if the Lutheran church is to grow and become a power in this country in future years, it must not at present be prohibited in its development by exclusively using a language which is foreign to this country.<sup>27</sup>

Despite her years-long efforts to promote the use of English, the majority of the members of Our Savior's Church persistently held on to the Norwegian language for several more decades. In 1931, her frustration resulted in her decision to join the First Lutheran Church, founded by Swedish immigrants in Moscow in 1897.<sup>28</sup>

Dorthea's literary debut was a sketch printed in the magazine, *Ungdommens Ven* [*The Friend of the Young People*] in 1901, a very brief manuscript which Nellie found hidden in a sewing kit and sent to the publisher without her sister's knowledge. The second story was published eleven years later: "In 1911 I wrote a little Christmas story "*Jul i Idaho*" ["Christmas in Idaho"] which I sent to *Ungdommens Ven*. It arrived too late for the Christmas issue and was

not printed until 1912."<sup>29</sup>

In March of the same year Dahl's article "*Vor Madagascar Mission*" ["Our Mission Work at Madagascar"] was printed in *The Spokane College Bulletin*, and articles on church issues appeared in several periodicals from this time onwards. Writing was secondary to her business career, and by 1913 Dorthea was fully employed "in accountant work in a big business firm here in town," presumably in Nathaniel Williamsons' department store in Moscow, Idaho. The prospects of a writing career seemed as distant as ever.<sup>30</sup>

Unexpectedly, as Dorthea was adjusting to her small town routines, serious illness once again intervened. She had previously praised the Idaho climate where "the sun is shining without burning," evidently unaware of the incipient danger of skin cancer. When she contacted this disease in 1914, she traveled to Chicago where she spent probably the most decisive years of her lifetime at the Norwegian Lutheran Deaconess Hospital. As a woman now in her mid-thirties with many partially developed talents, she found the environment stimulating. The stay offered new opportunities in addition to providing medical treatment and Dorthea now came of age as an author.

To help cover the expenses of her board, Dorthea undertook various forms of employment at the hospital, first working as a seamstress, and later as a clerk in the hospital office. She soon began contributing to the hospital's monthly publication *Diakonissen*

[*The Deaconess*]. By writing articles on church events as well as fiction for this periodical, Dahl assisted in raising awareness and support for the work of the deaconess institution in Chicago.<sup>31</sup>

Fortunately, Dorthea was not confined to the hospital grounds but could take part in a variety of exciting social activities, including meeting with Norwegian church dignitaries and

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*I would not have missed these two years for anything. It is good to be with our close family, but it is also good to have only yourself and the Lord to rely on. . . .*

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attending various dinners and lectures. Furthermore, the outbreak of World War I extended Nellie's first furlough, which had been granted in 1912. When Nellie joined Dorthea at the Deaconess Hospital in August 1914, the sisters made several trips together. Then Nellie spent the following winter with their parents in Moscow. When she returned to Chicago in the spring of 1915, the sisters visited several places in the Midwest.

As Nellie prepared to leave for her second, seven-year term in Madagascar, Dorthea faced a longer separation from her family for the first time, finding it an edifying challenge. Stating the distance of "a journey of 69 hours by speed railway from Moscow to Chicago," she reflected upon the situation with sober realism: "I would not have missed these two years for anything. It is good to be with our close family, but it is also good to have only yourself and the Lord to rely on. . . . You can be sociable, and you can also feel intense loneliness."

Through her close friendship with some of the sisters, Dorthea joined them on their visits to nurse poor and sick people in the slums. Here she observed conditions which raised her awareness of the harsh city life. Filled with compassion for the deprived people as well as with admiration for the merciful work performed by the sisters, she commented that "in a great city like Chicago you will experience things which affect your entire life."<sup>32</sup>

At the Deaconess Hospital, Dorthea entertained the patients by reading stories written by herself or other authors. Over the years Dahl developed this talent, gradually overcoming her initial modesty about reading her own texts. At the age of sixty she confessed:

I am developing a strong feeling about my readings. You know years and years ago I never could look a story in the face the first six months after it had been published. Now I feel entirely different. A person who sings usually loves to sing and is happy to make her singing a

contribution to the enjoyment of her friends. [The] same with one who plays the piano. So in time I began to feel that, small as it is, this is my gift and should be made to be my contribution, if there are those who could find enjoyment from it. So I am definitely happy whenever I am asked to give any of my readings."<sup>33</sup>

Revitalized by the previously unfamiliar big city milieu, and enjoying the opportunity to devote extensive time to literary work, Dahl began writing stories in English and Norwegian interchangeably, and she had them printed in different periodicals. Her fiction deals with a variety of subject matter and themes. In addition to the poverty stricken Chicago neighborhoods, her themes are frequently developed in rural or small town Idaho settings.

Although Dorthea Dahl had abandoned her calling for missionary work, she continued to write about the internal, and eternal, questions of the meaning of life. Already in her first brief sketches she introduced the motif of an individual's choice of a future career. Over the years she created many characters searching for fulfillment through intellectual growth, ambitions often competing with ideals of responding to people's needs.

Her first Idaho story, published in 1912, provided material for subsequent works: "In 1914 I wrote a longer story about the same people and conditions, which was printed on the 1st of August, 1914. Simultaneously I wrote for *Diakonissen*, and have written two stories for *Diakonissen* later, Christmas 1914 and Christmas 1915."<sup>34</sup> The latter were stories in English, but in late 1915, Augsburg Publishing House in Minneapolis published her first book, a collection of short stories written in Norwegian entitled *Fra Hverdagslivet* [*From Everyday Life*].<sup>35</sup>

Many reviewers in the Midwest Norwegian-American press stressed Dahl's potential as a writer, not only for a limited ethnic group, but also for a general reading

public. Nevertheless, the fact that her fiction was published in the Norwegian language narrowed the circle of readers. Those who did read her book enjoyed the humorous characteristics of a familiar ethnic environment. At the appearance of Dahl's first book, O. E.



Dorthea with her parents in an undated studio portrait.

Rølvaag, the noted Norwegian author of *Giants in the Earth*, expressed his admiration for its 'enthraling' stories with 'pure gold' in them.<sup>36</sup>

### A Double Obligation

With the intense campaign for assimilation of all ethnic groups during World War I, Dorthea's career as a Norwegian-American author was doomed to decline before it had actually begun. But, fortunately, her literary debut coincided with ardent efforts to promote an independent Norwegian-American literature in the years before and after 1920. The editor of the Augsburg Publishing House, Anders Sundheim, was convinced "the future of his people in America depended on the preservation and cultivation of the Norwegian language."<sup>37</sup>

Dorthea's rising literary success released an intense urge for creative writing which she confessed to O. E. Rølvaag in 1916: "Of course I know how daring, yes, silly, it must be regarded of me to venture my fortune with a book, but this is, after all, something that has been growing inside me until I could hardly control it myself."<sup>38</sup>

Dahl was pleased with her growing acceptance as an author, and she shared some news of this with her godmother and aunt Dorthea in Norway: "I am sending something I have written, if you have time you may be a trifle interested in looking through it. The piece I wrote for *Stars over the Mission Field* is all drawn from real life. *From Everyday Life* is my first book, and my first effort in the direction of belles lettres. My book was extremely well received by our Norwegian-American critics and I have had so much encouragement to continue but this year I can't manage more than one or two Christmas stories."<sup>39</sup>

On Christmas Eve 1915, a cablegram reporting her mother's critical illness prompted her hasty return to Moscow. With this sudden interruption of her life, Dorthea was faced with two options available for unmarried women of her age: either provide for herself by entering the professional business world, or remain at home in a traditional role sanctioned by pious representatives of her church.

An anonymous article published in the *Lutheran Herald* describes the virtues of the home daughter role: "The woman nowadays may care for herself. She will not be a burden on her toilworn father, nor a clog upon her brothers, since, if the necessity exists, she may herself become a wage-earner. Nevertheless, the home daughter who is not discontented with her lot, but on the contrary, who is willing to accept her household, her people, and her quiet post of service as the one God meant for her, will not find time hanging heavily on her hands. There is much room for tillage in the home vineyard."<sup>40</sup>

Returning to care for her parents, Dorthea undertook a double obligation, or even a triple task. During the ensuing years she assisted and nursed her parents while providing a steady income for the household through her accounting work. In addition, she continued in her persistent but irregular attempts at pursuing a writing career, a nighttime activity even her closest family hardly noticed. Dorthea's female role and career, which she began before World War I, were not typical. Few women held jobs before World War II, and most women who did work were teachers or nurses.<sup>41</sup>



*Williamson's Department Store was located from 1911 to 1919 in the 1891 McConnell-Maguire building on the corner of First and Main Streets.*

In the prosperous years before World War I, working for Nathaniel Williamson, who owned a large dry goods and department store, was considered a good opportunity. Nevertheless, both Dorthea and her father characterized the circumstances as hard, and Dorthea found accounting work not particularly enjoyable and hardly corresponding with her social ideas. Yet, she took a pragmatic approach to her situation:

There was a position vacant early last spring so I had to start before I really wanted to in order not to lose the opportunity. It is a permanent job and rather well paid, with the chance of

promotion. I don't think I'll stay in this kind of work my whole life, but at the present I consider myself lucky to have got this job. This kind of work seems a little too rigid and automatic, I don't think I can make use of my talents to the extent that I want or that I know I could, but I'm waiting on the Lord's good time."<sup>42</sup>

By 1918 her position was becoming uncertain as she described it to her sisters: "Williamson is going out of business so I may soon have to look elsewhere for work and I may even have to take less [salary]." Comforting herself with the prospects, she added, "I am quite well known now down town, having been at Williamson's so long, and to stick it out with 'N. W.' for so many years is in itself a recommendation."<sup>43</sup>

Busy with her numerous duties, Dahl still had five short stories printed in 1916 and 1917. Then in 1918, a dramatic year of enormous contrasts for her, her production increased considerably. The periodical *Lutheraneren* [*The Lutheran*] commissioned her to write a series of short stories, a project which took all the time she could spare: "I am writing for *Lutheraneren* now and am getting along fine," she optimistically informed Nellie in the spring of 1918.

The ideas are coming faster than I can take care of them. I am writing the stories about the same people, or the same neighborhood, so together they will form a complete group. . . . Sundheim had said that if my stories took well in the paper he would have them published in book form and that I would then receive a royalty from them besides the price "*Lutheraneren*" paid me for them. . . . I am not foolish enough to haggle over the price of my literary productions at this stage of the game. Just merely being recognized by those guys at A. P.

H. will mean burning the midnight oil for this chicken all right.<sup>44</sup>

A letter to her Norwegian relatives conveys similar enthusiasm with the pleasure of writing and it reveals her desire to become a full-time author: "Right now I am in the middle of this work, you see, and I stay up until midnight almost every evening. But it's a wonderful kind of work. If I only could reach the point where I could quit my job at the office, and devote myself to writing so I could make some progress, but with only such a short while to write in the evening it takes a long time to finish only one single sketch."<sup>45</sup>

This effort resulted in a series of stories about Scandinavian immigrants in an Idaho settlement. Although the stories never appeared in book form, they were partly republished in English in *Jul i Vesterheimen* [*Christmas in the Western Home*] in the late 1920s.

1918 was also the year when Dorthea Dahl received her highest distinction as a Norwegian-American author by being the first woman to be awarded the Literary Prize by *Det Norske Selskab i Amerika* [The Norwegian Society in America]. It came with a prize of \$50 which was sponsored by the Hon. O. M. Oleson in Fort Dodge. Oleson's congratulatory letter concluded "Today I received a letter from Mr. W. Ager, Eau Claire, Wis. and he told me that you have won the literary prize which I have sponsored. I have not read any of your stories; but I have not the slightest doubt that you have greatly deserved this little acknowledgment. Hoping that you will continue as you have begun, I remain with the best of wishes, Yours O. M. Oleson."<sup>46</sup> Together with this honor, the 1918 commission for *Lutheraneren*, and

publication of other stories, convinced Dorthea that she was now finally moving in the right direction.

### Tragedies Abroad and at Home

The tragic news of the horrifying events in Europe during World War I severely disturbed Dorthea, and even though she acknowledged the unpopularity of her opinion, she confided to her Norwegian aunt, Dorthea Valen, "And the war is still going on. We, and in particular we living this far west, are affected by it to a rather small degree. The prices have gone up on some products, and the quality of dyestuff is very bad and very expensive, but otherwise we do not even notice it. But what horror over there – where the cradle of all 'culture' and civilization stood! What future go we towards, I wonder?"<sup>47</sup>

Well into 1918 Dorthea felt increasing anxiety over the many tragic consequences of warfare, resenting that young boys were sent off to fight, and particularly that those who were not killed or maimed for life would return home as moral wrecks. "Well, I suppose it is dangerous to say anything about the war. Still, I must be permitted to say that it is a curse. We in America are also starting to see some of its ugly sides, even though it has so far just consisted of uniformed parades and brass-band music."<sup>48</sup> Her worries turned more realistic when two young nephews were waiting for orders that would take them from college to European battlefields.

Then the most unexpected grief struck the family in April 1918, when Leora, the eldest daughter of Pauline and Eneval Ostroot, suddenly died from meningitis. The most heart-rending, descriptive piece of writing that Dorthea Dahl ever created was composed on the evening after her niece's funeral in the form of

an 18-page handwritten letter to her sisters. In her beautiful handwriting Dorthea pours out emotions which she otherwise kept under strict control, urging her sisters not to grieve, “even tho the sun has gone down for us in these two houses on Howard Street.”

Dorthea seems to be testing her beliefs and gives in to a desire to reshape the whole tragedy through poetic language: “There can be no grief, no bitter regrets. It was as tho a flower had been plucked from its stem and when it drooped and wilted we laid it away, but we know it has taken on fresher colors and has been given a sweeter fragrance. There was something so brilliantly, so gorgeously beautiful about Leora; she was in love with life, and so full of life, and yet she never seemed to belong to this life. One thot came to me in the night that I think just describes her: She was like a radiantly beautiful butterfly, poised ready for flight.”

In between numerous metaphoric passages Dorthea inserts her practical sense, describing details from the development of the illness and the family members’ reactions, as well as the expressions of sympathy from Moscow inhabitants: “It seemed as tho the whole town was one big sympathetic family. Among others Congressman and Mrs. French sent such a beautiful, heartening message.”<sup>49</sup>

The devastating news of Leora’s death reached Nellie in Madagascar six months after it occurred. By then it was once again Dorthea’s duty to inform her sisters of three more deaths in their immediate family. That summer their nephew, Peter Luvaas, the son of Dorthea’s half-sister Oline, lost his first wife and was left with three small children. On the 15th of October 1918 Lene Dahl passed away after a long period of failing health.

Despite the sadness, her death came as a relief to all, but as they were preparing the old Norwegian pioneer mother’s funeral, an even more paralyzing message reached the family: the death of the Ostroots’ eldest son, Conrad, a Harvard student on his way across the Atlantic to join the forces in Europe.

Dorthea’s description to her sisters once more sounds like a cry of tormenting pain. Together with her sister Pauline, on the day before their mother’s funeral, she discovers Eneval Ostroot hastily approaching the house in the middle of the morning, and the women immediately sense tragedy: “Pauline and I looked at each other but said little until he got inside. ‘Is it something bad?’ Pauline asked – his face was like ashes – and he said: ‘Yes, it is pretty bad.’ ‘It is Conrad,’ she said quietly and I got hold of the telegram he held in his hand. It was from Washington, telling that they regretted to inform them that their son, Conrad Lyman Ostroot, electrician, on board the ‘Caronia,’ had died of pneumonia on the 10th of October and had been buried at sea.”<sup>50</sup>

Despite her grief, Dorthea remained collected enough to help arrange all the practical details while still working full time. Because public gatherings were restricted due to the Spanish influenza, no church service could be held for the devoted pioneer mother, Lene Dahl. Instead, the family held a memorial ceremony at the graveside in the Moscow cemetery, followed by gatherings in the homes of the relatives of both deceased.

It is interesting that Lene’s obituary published in *Reform* referred to the youngest daughter Dorthea Dahl as the well-known author of many Norwegian-American short stories even though the Lutheran periodicals of the Midwest did not acknowledge her despite the fact that her stories had been running from June of that year in *Lutheraneren*.<sup>51</sup>

Dorthea barely hesitated in deciding to remain in Moscow with her widowed father. “Many have asked me what father and I will do, and many more are no doubt wondering about it, but I do not think it even occurs to father that I might want to make any change. And I am glad he feels that way. He would never be happy any other place and he is too independent to give up his own home and his old habits without suffering under it. So I will go on as before, and if the way is made clear for me later while I still

have health and strength, perhaps I can yet get into more congenial work.”<sup>52</sup>

Confiding in Nellie concerning these questions as well as other private matters, Dorthea referred to a disappointed suitor who was unwilling to give up hope of courting her: “My friend in Canada writes intermittently and persistently. How I wish I could find him a good substitute! The trouble is he would insist on a close reproduction of myself, and the type is somewhat rare.”<sup>53</sup>

This is the only time Dorthea wrote about her relationships with men, and it was scribbled on the margin of a letter she intended only for Nellie. There is no evidence of whether, or when, she specifically determined to remain a single woman.

Her only other relationship with a man occurred around the turn of the century when she worked for a few months in a store near her home in South Dakota. She developed a close relationship with her employer who was unhappily married. Although the two fell deeply in love and experienced a very romantic summer, divorce was unthinkable for the man, and both of them agreed to part.

When she met him again in 1925, he was a widower and she was free from her ‘home daughter’ duties, but the two mutually agreed that they had grown too far apart to renew their relationship. Several middle-aged widowers in Moscow also courted Dorthea, who turned down their proposals, considering herself too old to change her ways for marriage.<sup>54</sup>

Working hours combined with domestic and volunteer duties fell into a regular routine during those years that Dorthea spent with her father until his death in 1925. Two decades later she summarized that period: “In 1918 my mother died and then came a long and really happy peaceful period for my father and me. He was a perfect saint in his home. He lived his religion if anyone ever did. He and I had the same interests not only in church but very intensely in politics – he had brought me up to be a militant Republican! – and when his eyes grew tired, I



*Dorthea Dahl, undated photograph.*

would take over and read to him evenings things we both enjoyed, sometimes Norwegian, often in English.”<sup>55</sup>

Despite the contentment she described, many of her stories from 1920 onwards deal with themes related to bereavement and death, often describing how the protagonist silently endures his or her loss while trying to disguise the gnawing grief even from the immediate family.

Dorthea Dahl’s second book, published in 1920, was a collection of stories called *Returning Home*, her only book in English. A preview of the book recognized “the writer’s ability to describe life naturally and realistically at the same time as she has her mission to carry out. She does not only dream. She has eyes to see life with and thoughts enabling her to make connections which most people with their conscious mind do not envisage.”<sup>56</sup>

Previously Waldemar Ager had maintained that Dahl’s early stories lacked what he characterized the element of ‘red’ in them, but



when reviewing *Returning Home* he admitted that “because she has a purpose with her new book she has dealt with something which has touched her emotionally – not very strongly but enough for there to be red and living blood running through it. She has something to write about this time, and that means a great deal.”<sup>57</sup>

Another contemporary, J. J. Skordalsvold, writing in the *Lutheran Church Herald*, admired Dorthea’s ability “to place herself in other people’s souls.” Besides, he found it of the utmost surprise that a woman from Idaho, “at Moscow, to be more particular,” could be in possession of such “a cosmopolitan grasp of men and things.” Skordalsvold further defended her technique of understated endings, a characteristic criticized by some readers: “[S]he leads you unhesitant up to the expected climax. Then she seems to say: ‘Well, my dear reader, you are no a-b-c-darian. You see the situation as well as I do. So I thank you for your agreeable company, and say goodbye to you.’ And this politeness acts like a charm.”<sup>58</sup>

Despite these positive reviews, Dahl published only four stories between 1921 and 1925, perhaps due to her busy schedule. After Williamson’s department store closed in 1919, Dorthea found employment at the Moscow Farmer’s Union, then at Washburn Wilson Seed Company, and lastly at Martin Mickey’s Insurance Company. She worked full time until her retirement in 1949.

The house on 324 Howard Street in Moscow was always Nellie’s home, too, where she lived during her furloughs from her missionary work. This contact with the family in Moscow strengthened Nellie’s awareness of the heavy burden of work and responsibility which her younger sister was carrying, especially from the early 1920s onwards: “Dorthea has managed all right through the summer. But the coming two months are the busiest of all the months of the year, so I am afraid the hard work will be telling

severely on her.”<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, Dorthea treasured being able to share a unique companionship with her father, a respected family man and respected member of the Moscow community. On February 9, 1923, Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, in celebrating the completion of a renovation project, honored the pioneer and church elder for his many years of faithful service.<sup>60</sup>

Peder Dahl died February 21, 1925. Only the obituary printed in the midwestern publication, *Lutheraneren*, mentioned him as the father of the author Dorthea Dahl. The two Moscow

newspapers in their obituaries seemed unaware of her literary contributions even though the family was recognized and respected for their church and civic activities.<sup>61</sup>

During the months following her father’s death Dorthea kept unusually active, but still grieved deeply. Her busy life could not ease her feeling of intense loneliness: “Never will I have such a good friend again, never will anyone love me as father did, and never will anybody understand me like him.”<sup>62</sup>

In addition to the demands of her work, caring for her father, and preparing for the Norwegian-American Centennial, Dorthea found time for writing. She participated in a literary competition in *Decorahposten* [*The Decorah Post*] in 1924 which resulted in her only published novel, *Byen paa Berget* [*The City on the Hill*], in 1925. The reviews were positive, and in 1926 a Midwestern magazine featured her as one of Idaho’s prominent women of literature.<sup>63</sup> In the ensuing years she devoted more of her spare time to various political and church-related groups than to developing her creative writing.

## Community and Church

After the horrifying events in Europe during the First World War, Dahl continued to express deep concern for maintaining world peace. She declared her opposition to President Wilson's policy after the 1918 armistice as well as to the following administration's peace strategy: "Now we have joined this World Court, too. I certainly am not happy about it. I think America can do more for peace in the world with her hands free. I personally praise the views of our Senator Borah completely. All that the European superpowers want from America is financial support, and then they laugh at our gullibility, and just ridicule us."<sup>64</sup>

During the 1920s, as Dorthea's political awareness grew considerably, she repeatedly manifested her stand as a Republican in an individualistic way. She became more politically active in the 1930s, joining the Latah County Republican Women's Club when it was formed in 1934. She attended monthly meetings and gradually took on more responsibilities, including serving as hostess, preparing programs, and working on committees. For a number of years she was a member and secretary of the Party's Idaho State Central Committee.

Dahl candidly expressed her disapproval of Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s and viewed the international development with skepticism, explaining that "I am a rugged individualist, a fiery isolationist. Our mission among the nations is to preserve peace, to maintain honest national standards, thus to put to shame the old nations who do brokerage with the liberties of their subjects. There was no reason for our plunging into the last war, and now there are disquieting signs that we may be expected to plunge ourselves into another holocaust."<sup>65</sup>

The 1920s and 1930s were also Dorthea's most intensive years in church activities. In addition to volunteering as teacher and superintendent of the local Sunday School, she was active in various Lutheran associations: the

Luther League, the Women's Missionary Federation, and the Federation's new branch, The Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation. The latter group, founded in 1926, was aimed toward business and professional women. She wrote her only published poem, "Daughters of the Reformation," for a regional convention of this group. She served as district historian, and later vice-president, of the Spokane Circuit of the Women's Missionary Federation. Dorthea contributed in numerous ways to other church groups over the next decades, including the ecumenical Moscow Council of Church Women. During her last fifteen years in Moscow she joined "a very fine young women's missionary society called the Miriam Circle,"<sup>66</sup> where she was president and program chair. She occasionally gave book reviews or lectures at the monthly meetings.

Through her varied volunteer work Dorthea developed new personal relationships, some of them more profound than others. In 1923 Rev. Gerhard Peterson was called to minister at Our Savior's Church where the extended Dahl family still held active membership. A unique friendship developed between Dorthea and the pastor's wife, Anne Marie Tangjerd-Peterson, who was ten years younger. A talented St. Olaf graduate and teacher and a former student of O. E. Rølvaag, she shared Dorthea's fascination with literature.

Anne Marie recognized Dorthea's qualifications more than others, and in 1925 she recommended her friend for the position of State Chairman for Idaho at the Norwegian-American Centennial: "Miss Dorthea Dahl, the authoress of *Moscow, Idaho*, would be very able to do the work, if she could at this time do it. She has resided here some twenty years – is an exceptionally brilliant woman. Her father's serious illness would be her only reason for not being willing and able to do the work outlined for this work."<sup>67</sup>

Anne Marie Peterson's correspondence with Rølvaag sheds light on the two women's relationship: "Miss Dorthea Dahl and I have

read both your books with special interest, criticized both this and that, together. Her *Byen paa Berget* [*The City on the Hill*] gave me many a good laugh. Miss Dahl is an extraordinarily nice person to be with – we have had many wonderful conversations. Just now I owe her a letter. She sent me a review and summary of Ager's last book; [I] am very anxious to get hold of that one."<sup>68</sup> Despite the difference in age as well as in educational and marital status, their friendship continued long after the Petersons left Moscow in 1926.

As Mrs. Peterson had predicted, Dorthea successfully represented Idaho at the Norwegian-American Centennial in Minneapolis in June 1925, and afterwards she organized a celebration in Moscow in July. These festivities were the absolute highlight of her lifetime. Her three-day stay at St. Olaf College left a lasting impression. Having reached her mid-forties and now able to move from Moscow, the visit east created new hopes of resuming her interrupted education: "I certainly hope to go back there [to St. Olaf College] again before a great many years. I have only myself now and if I keep my health I will not stick here all the time."<sup>69</sup>

Dorthea never succeeded in fulfilling this dream, possibly due to a recurrence of skin cancer. She was successfully treated, even though scars were always noticeable on her face. Then around 1930 she developed a lung infection. Her long convalescence gave her the opportunity for writing, including several stories published in non-church magazines.

She continued to write stories in both languages, even though her private letters indicate an increasing problem of preserving her knowledge of Norwegian. Dahl's last fiction story appeared in *The Friend* in 1942, but her novel, *Byen paa Berget*, was reprinted as a serial in the mid-fifties. Well into her retirement years, she composed articles and speeches dealing with historic and cultural topics. Unfortunately, a complete collection of her writing may not exist. During these years, Dahl's interest in reading never diminished, although she became more selective over the years. In a letter to Mrs. Peterson she commented on the two Norwegian-American authors whom she greatly admired: "You know I never fell under the spell of Rølvaag, proud as I am of him as a fellow-countryman and St. Olafite. But this book of Ager's, *Hundeøine* [*I Sit Alone*], just took me off my feet. It is so clever, and so-everything-you-can-think-of-that's-nice adjectives."<sup>70</sup>

Soon after her father's death in May 1926, Dorthea convinced her newly widowed sister,

Sina Marie Bue, to move to Moscow and join her in the family house. "She then moved here to Moscow with her children and lived for some years with me in this house but bought her own two blocks from here."<sup>71</sup> Nellie later joined the three sisters, Dorthea, Sina Marie, and Pauline on her third furlough from missionary work.

Despite the closeness of the sisters, Dorthea realized that Nellie was growing more detached: "We of course enjoyed having her here, but it was inevitable that she would more and more grow



Dorthea and her four sisters at the Howard Street House. Standing from l to r, Nellie, Dorthea, and Olina. Seated in front are Sina and Pauline.

into being a stranger to us, a greatly beloved one, but just the same not a part of our everyday lives.”<sup>72</sup>

Nellie left for Madagascar in 1934, never to return home. Pauline died in 1934 and Sina Marie in 1937. Now, being deprived of all those ‘nearest and dearest,’ Dorthea underwent a period of serious distress. A letter written in November 1937 to her lifelong pen friend and Norwegian cousin, Sigrid Valen, reveals some of her pain: “It has been such a deep grief for me and such bereavement to lose them. We meant so much to each other and spent time together as often as the occasion permitted.”<sup>73</sup>

At the age of 56 the troubled Dorthea once again felt compelled to reconsider the existential questions of life and her own role for the future: “I felt conscious of a definite choice lying before me. I could go on with the remnants of my life and be a sad and perhaps queer recluse. Or I could brace myself and build a broader life for myself. I chose the latter.”<sup>74</sup>

Her determination to carry on helped her withstand the events during the ensuing years. In 1940 her half-sister Oline Luvaas died in Moscow, and in the winter of 1942 the message of Nellie's death in Madagascar reached Dorthea. She arranged the memorial service to honor her missionary sister. It took place in the Moscow church she herself had left in 1931. A final bereavement was the death of her half-brother Berthinus Luvaas in 1954.<sup>75</sup>

Judging from her many activities and volunteer work, Dorthea managed to enjoy her renewed approach to life. Always a great admirer of good music, she described Moscow as a musical town, and was particularly proud that the schools and the University of Idaho taught music. She subscribed to all concerts held in the area, frequently attending performances with friends or relatives. “We are so fortunate here in that Moscow and Pullman pool their resources, for [the] towns and for the two schools, and then we go to all concerts in both places. We certainly get some of the biggest ‘names’ in the country.”<sup>76</sup>

Dorthea increasingly associated with people related to the University of Idaho, sharing with many of them her life-long enthusiasm for sports. She proved her loyalty by attending matches in almost any sort of weather conditions until her senior years:

1950 football was fun for Idaho. We did not have a dazzling season, but it was good, above average for Idaho. I saw Idaho tie WSC, which was about as good as a victory. It was certainly ‘seven to seven in favor of Idaho.’ I saw the games in the middle twenties when Idaho defeated WSC and have hoped to see it happen again but perhaps this was as close as I will get to it. I shall soon have to give up going to football games and pay some respect to my age! I am not going to basket ball games any more but I do listen to the over the radio. In basket ball that is nearly is good, while in foot ball nothing can take the place of the thrill of watching teams at play.”<sup>77</sup>

Other pursuits were more serious. In the late 1940s she enthusiastically supported an ecumenical campaign in Moscow for sponsoring “some of these ‘Displaced Persons,’ refugees from Communism, who come to the U. S. to find a new home.”<sup>78</sup> She temporarily provided rooms for a Latvian family, finding joy at meeting fellow Lutherans from far away who shared a similar culture. The ecumenical aspect of this committee, and the cooperation among Moscow’s Protestant churches, particularly pleased her.

Assisting refugees from Communist countries was a project very much in accordance with her anti-socialist conviction. However, according to a close friend who rented Dahl’s downstairs apartment for herself and her two sons in the 1930s, Dorthea was unusually tolerant towards people holding views different from her own. She noted that even though Dorthea was loyal to her Lutheran faith, “her

religion was broad.”<sup>79</sup>

Dorthea supported and participated in a variety of organizations. She served on the board of the Latah County Red Cross and was treasurer of the Latah County Cancer Control Society for several years. She became more active in the Business and Professional Women's Club in Moscow, holding offices and frequently preparing programs for the bi-weekly meetings. On special occasions she attended the organization's conventions. After attending one in the summer of 1947 in Sun Valley, Idaho, she described the Women's Club as a grand organization, composed of a “cross section of American women, regardless of national descent or of church. All nationalities and all church connections have to be respected and treated with the same deference.”<sup>80</sup>

Dorthea's numerous community activities never weakened her strong attachment to her family, although the number of relatives living in Idaho continually declined as the older generation passed away and many of the younger ones left home. Accepting that the years when the extended family lived more or less in the same block in Moscow were gone, she began organizing annual midsummer family reunions, often with fifty to a hundred relatives present. She shared information by circulating letters among relatives and sending her own annual Christmas letter. Her nephew, the well-known music professor Morten Luvaas, remarked to their relatives in Norway in 1956: “Aunt Dorthea's Christmas letter is expected to arrive soon and then we get to hear about everything, from what happens in the family to matters way into the nation's politics. She is very enthusiastic about such issues.”<sup>81</sup> Dorthea's letters revealed genuine concern for every family member and underlined the value of education: “Those who live here in Moscow are doing well, and so are the others as far as I know. No one has become rich – as one is supposed to in America – but the older ones have laid aside a little for their old age and the younger generation have received an education



*Martin and Beth Mickey, January 1949.*

that will enable them to ‘make their own way.’”<sup>82</sup>

Dorthea spent the last 15 of her working years with the Mickey's Insurance Company in Moscow. She had come to terms with her profession, which she mastered to perfection. She developed a personal friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Mickey, who remembered her as an unusually efficient clerk, always keeping things in excellent order. In 1949, after a long layoff over the winter due to slow business, Dorthea retired.

Extensive free time and rest made her at the age of 70 feel better than ever before, and she especially appreciated more time to indulge in her favorite interest: “I have of course always been an avid reader and even when I worked full time at a job I averaged two books per week, usually one fiction and one non-fiction. Now I can keep that schedule with ease, beside the various periodicals which I get and three Lutheran church papers, magazines of news, fiction, philosophy. I keep a book record in which I list books and make remarks as to contents. Then I review my record from time to time to bring it all back fresh to memory.”<sup>83</sup>

Dorthea finally seemed at ease with her destiny, and particularly with the familiar small town environment in Moscow. Then suddenly in the summer of 1951, she decided to sell her old family house and move to the Lutheran Homes

for the Aged in Coeur d'Alene, an institution she had been acquainted with since the early 1920s: "I had never thought to leave Moscow, it's such a nice little town where I had lived since 1903, and where I had a lot of friends so I knew almost everybody there . . . but then something unexpected came up." In June of that year she had attended a dedication ceremony of the Lutheran Homes and toured the new section. She expressed her admiration of the expanded area: "I was interested in the attractive modern office and said to the superintendent that it would be fun to take over the office administration and before I knew it I had practically promised to come back in July to try."<sup>84</sup>

Dorthea's special talents and her practical and sociable attributes made her retirement in Coeur d'Alene a delightful period. She frequently contributed at programs and greatly enjoyed the response from an attentive audience: "[T]he job is varied. Officially I am a receptionist, secretary, and bookkeeper, but in addition I am also telephone messenger, elevator operator, assistant editor and entertainer."<sup>85</sup>

Dorthea referred to all these tasks as 'blessed work,' eagerly continuing in these tasks as long as her health permitted. She also was able to travel. In 1954 she visited a nephew in Boston, her first trip to the east coast of the United States, a place of great interest to her: "Boston is considered the cradle of America, you know – so it is interesting historically to see that region."<sup>86</sup>

Accustomed to a life of weak health Dorthea gratefully appreciated her vitality during her last years. However, her final battle began in the summer of 1957 when a surgery revealed breast cancer. Still, she was able to resume her duties in the autumn and had apparently regained much of her strength by Christmas, expressing optimism about politics and her faith: "I think we are fortunate beyond words in having Eisenhower as President, but there has been too little made known about him except his golf and his various physical ailments. I think Eisenhower is our man of destiny – but next unto him comes Richard Nixon. You may notice that I leave out Adlai [Stevenson]." Referring to



*A family reunion December 19, 1948. Dorthea is seated second from left. Others in the photo are not identified.*

the ongoing Sputnik race and the Russians' arrogance when reporting that they had found no trace of a deity in space, Dorthea proclaimed her own faith in this last greeting to family and friends: "Let the Russians arrogantly claim that they put God out of the sky when they send up their moons and their satellites. Let us seek to master the outer space and to explore the planets if we must, but let us stay attuned to the song of all nature, and to the music of the spheres, and give recognition to Him in whose world we all have our being."<sup>87</sup>

As Dorthea's health considerably declined that last winter, reading became her favorite occupation more than ever. For years her membership in a Writer's League group had stimulated her literary mind, and in 1957 she

wrote that she was “still taking part in the local writers’ League group and get quite a lot of enjoyment out of it,” although she no longer held any office. She was rarely able to get out during those last winter months except to attend Sunday church services, “so I read and rest – and write letters – and read some more, watch my TV, play my records – and read some more.”<sup>88</sup>

Fortunately, Dorthea felt well enough to make a last trip to familiar places in the Midwest during the summer of 1958, accompanied by a nephew. On her return to Idaho a medical examination disclosed liver cancer, and in spite of expert nursing at the Coeur d’Alene Lutheran Homes her health declined rapidly. At her deathbed on September 11, 1958 three children of her beloved sister Pauline Ostroot were present. Two days later the Trinity Lutheran Church in Coeur d’Alene organized a memorial service followed by a graveside service in the afternoon at the Moscow cemetery in Moscow. Dorthea Dahl was buried near the graves of her parents.<sup>89</sup>

### Themes and Characters from the Idaho Stories

The available source material shows an extensive list of fiction by Dorthea Dahl published in various periodicals between 1901 and 1942, including her three books. Three short stories reflect the author’s Norwegian-American heritage and her Lutheran background. The first one, a Norwegian-language Idaho story published in *Ungdommens Ven* in 1914, features a young female character in a rural Idaho setting. The second, a story from *Returning Home*, published in 1920, is told from a male protagonist’s point of view in a more urban environment. The third, *Bækkens Sang*, is a family story set both in the Midwest and the Far West. They propagandize neither

‘Norwegianness’ nor Lutheranism; the author simply uses her familiar settings to explore the characters’ existential questions irrespective of time and place.

Dahl’s depiction of Idaho includes the beautiful natural characteristics and fertile land along with the hardships people had to overcome to survive on this last lonely American frontier. Migrants coming from a

more developed region with established cultural and educational institutions often found it hard to cope with the lack of culture and comfort.

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. . . so I read and rest – and write letters – and read some more, watch my TV, play my records – and read some more.

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Such aspects dominate the story “*Hun vilde dele med Glæde deres Kaar*” (“With Joy She Would Share Her People’s Life”), published in *Ungdommens Ven* in August 1914.

In addition to focusing on a young girl’s battling with her desire for a full life, this is an interesting text in the way it compares rural Idaho with a very cumbersome Midwest farm life. Dahl depicts Miss Amalie Lind, a Midwest farmer’s daughter, who in both geographical settings is restless, yearning for something beyond the monotony of hard work and uninviting weather conditions; she is searching for more enriching experiences.

The young girl manages to work her way to an education, and at college she can enjoy many rich cultural activities; the fulfillment of her dream of an independent professional career is near: “[E]ventually the day came when she herself could start working as a teacher. Oh, how she loved her work! And how happy and proud she was each time she was able to put a note of money into her mother’s hand.”

But rumors of a better life for the whole family reach their region when “her father began receiving letters and pamphlets from the West, and the same happened at the neighbors . . . who sold all [their] possessions for whatever price and moved out to the wonderful country

which lay there beyond the Rocky Mountains.” The optimistic Amalie now joins her family as they migrate westwards, and the prospects of a young school teacher in Idaho appear promising; she approaches her new environment with great expectations: “The journey across the mountains over had been like a fairy tale to her. She was unable to sleep, could hardly eat, just had to stare at the changing panorama. Her eyes which until then were used to the endless plains of the prairie, rejoiced in the sight of every bend, every mountain cliff and every valley; she never thought she would see enough of it.”

However, Amalie is soon disappointed in the reality of a teacher in the Idaho countryside, and her dreary mood is accompanied by rainy days, noisy pupils, and few intellectual challenges. Still, on her way to the schoolhouse she frequently passes an old tree which bears witness of the past. It was

a tall, impressive pine tree, and that had more than once whispered its story to her. It had been whispering about the days when the peaceful Nez Perce Indian tribes had camped at its foot. It had been whispering about Lewis and Clark, who with their brave men had passed this area, and about the first courageous Government Engineers who had carried out their surveys and calculations in its shadow. But then one day it lay chopped down and the ‘stump-puller’ was fastened to the strong roots. She hurried past it, it seemed as a desecration. This is the way it was with everything out here, she thought, next spring they would probably grow potatoes or Red Russian wheat there.

This works as a fearful foreboding of ruthless disrespect of the real values in the region.

Shortly afterwards Amalie spends some days at the local parsonage, keeping Mrs. Thorson and her little son company while Reverend

Thorson attends a convention back east. Amalie notices how Mrs. Thorson, a well-educated music teacher, is sacrificing her own career by serving a rural congregation on the last American frontier, and this reveals to Amalie that to prioritize the benefit of others is the key to Mrs. Thorson's happiness in this wilderness. By abandoning her own desire for pleasure and sophisticated company, the minister's wife admits that this life takes some endurance, but also gives priceless rewards.

During the summer the two women learn to appreciate their adopted home area, as expressed by Mrs. Thorson one day while they are resting in the hills overlooking a canyon: “[J]ust to sit here and look out towards the valley and listen to the sound of the pine trees is better than many a sermon; and how it urges us to throw off all the obligations which modern life constantly tries to impose upon us – the falseness, the restlessness and the trouble – and how much should we not try and build up a free, loving relationship among people.”

The visit results in a turning point for Amalie, who previously has been prone to keeping people at a distance, considering herself too sophisticated to waste her time associating with uneducated persons: “And she was glad that she had a whole summer ahead of her, where she in her daily life with her own people could try and follow her new ideals, so perhaps she could become a little more mature before she returned to her work.”<sup>90</sup>

In the next story, “The Old Book Case,” the young lawyer Herman Diesen is invited to celebrate Christmas with his girlfriend, Edith, and her father, Judge Trimble, whom Herman admires tremendously. At the Christmas party he will be introduced to several “men of influence in the city, men who were in a position to be of assistance to him.” Herman intends to take advantage of the opportunity, even though the judge's recent involvement in a lawsuit over some shady timber business disturbs his conscience. His plans are interrupted by the news of his father's sudden death, and Herman



immediately leaves the city to attend the funeral in his small home town.

His father's best friend, the attorney Mr. Berlie, mildly reminds Herman that he actually came too late to fulfill his father's wish for his son to return home. In his ambitious search for success, Herman has found no time to visit his father. After the funeral, when Herman explains that he intends to put the old house up for sale, Mr. Berlie suggests the possibility of a job for a young lawyer in his home town.

Without paying much attention to the remark, Herman starts going over the items and furniture in the family home, planning to advertise it all for sale. Then he discovers an old bookcase. This old piece of furniture contains worn books of no apparent interest to him, but there are some items that gradually arouse his curiosity: "There was the old family Bible, which had belonged to his grandfather. Such things were customarily passed from father to son, but what could he do with it all? There were devotional books and collections of sermons, and whole sets of distinctly theological appearance."

Toward the end of the day Herman is preparing to leave the house when he stumbles over a book which has fallen out of the bookcase: "Picking it up he chanced to see on the title page the words: 'To my son.' The book was not new, so it did not appear as tho his father had intended it for a gift. He opened others, and found the same inscription in several. Then in one, 'To Margaret,' met his eyes . . . . He began to feel dimly that there were values hidden in these books, not so much perhaps on account of the things they contained as for the reason that they had comprised his father's whole world."

Late in the evening when Herman returns to the parsonage where he is staying, he becomes involved in an interesting conversation with Margaret, his host's sister-in-law, whom he had met just the day before. Though a young nurse she was a mature woman, who "talked easily and without any effort, telling him about her

experiences during the epidemic just past. Family ties grew strong in the face of death, he recalled her saying." The previous year Margaret had helped Herman's father recover from an attack and became an attached friend of the old man. In comparison with Margaret, Herman finds his big city girlfriend Edith superficial, chatty, and boring. He takes no offence when Margaret expresses deep disbelief at his plans of selling the family house.

The story ends with a suggestion that the young lawyer will decide to return to his home town, presumably also fulfilling the second of his father's dreams by marrying the sincere Margaret. The implications of the romantic ending only partly answer the question raised as Herman looks through his father's well-used books: "What was there in his own life which could take the place which this had taken in his father's life?" By exploring the symbolic values of the old book case, the author leaves the readers to form their own set of values.<sup>91</sup>

The third story, "*Baekkens Sang*," ["The Murmuring of the Creek"] similarly illustrates the choice between traditional and modern American values. Here the conflict between husband and wife is more dominant than between members of different generations. An immigrant father is pushed hard to satisfy his wife's ambitions for material and social enhancement without ever becoming successful enough for her. When the wife realizes her husband's failure to meet her demands, she transfers her ambitions to her children. Consequently, she is strongly opposed to her eldest daughter Signe's decision to marry an uneducated man recently arrived from the Old Country. Before the young couple move to a settlement further west, the mother declares that it has been a useless waste of money to invest in education and music lessons for Signe. The symbolism in this story is connected to the ringing sound of a creek close to Signe and Einar's Idaho farm, a setting which Signe in the beginning finds extremely intriguing: "The mountains towards the east were so tall that one

could often see the clouds resting below their peaks. The stream which ran across their piece of land was singing a new melody for Signe, but Einar recognized it from his childhood [in Norway].”

After many years of marriage and rough farm work the scenic view gradually loses its charms in the hard struggle of everyday life. Signe thinks she has little to share with her family when she writes to them. No longer able to appreciate the murmuring sound of the stream, she instead starts to feel a dreadful shudder from the noise, especially when she returns from a rare trip to the nearest town where she enjoyed a few glimpses of the outside world. Finally, one year late in the autumn, Signe takes two of her five children to visit her parents, planning to stay at the old midwestern farm over Christmas. Finding her mother and sisters totally absorbed in a materialistic lifestyle, Signe observes significant changes which make her a stranger in the world of her childhood. Her recollections of homely peace and quiet are replaced by a constant restlessness in the house; all the familiar furniture has been removed for new and expensive pieces, and even her own precious, simple piano has been dumped for a fancier instrument.

During her stay Signe finds the opportunity for a private conversation with her father, who seems to be brooding on some serious matter: “And one evening it came. Her sisters were away at a party and her mother had gone to bed early. Signe and her father stayed up longer, and she had been telling him about various things out west. Then they both were silent for while. His pipe had gone out and he took great trouble to light it again. At last he laid it aside and said without looking at Signe, ‘I suppose he has been kind to you, Einar?’ It came so unexpectedly, Signe almost laughed at the question although she would rather have burst into tears . . . . ‘Actually, that’s the only thing that counts,’ he continued as if talking to himself. ‘It doesn’t matter if you’re poor and have to work hard if only you can have a good relationship.’”

Deeply touched by her father’s concern for her happiness. Signe withdraws to her room and starts packing for her return to join Einar on their Idaho farm. She is filled with a desire to assure her husband that his strenuous toil in order to satisfy her was not the most essential aim in their lives: “What did it mean to be rich, anyway? Had she not discovered that in her old family home how little material wealth was worth?”

Signe manages to reach home two days before Christmas, just in time to prepare a traditional and pleasant celebration for her family. The hard work to provide for their everyday needs as well as their children’s future will continue, but the monotonous sound of the creek resumes its comforting effect as Signe confides in her husband Einar about her rediscovered happiness. Reminded of the sadness in her father’s words she is determined to build a rich family life based on genuine, close relationships rather than on excessive material growth.<sup>92</sup>

This brief introduction does not give a complete picture of Dorthea Dahl’s fiction; not even of the literary quality of these three stories. However, it does indicate, through the author’s own words, the values she discovered in the process of assimilating to an increasingly modern America, a United States she strongly believed in: “We are still in a transition period, and are in some ways a separate people. We are not Norwegians, that is certain. We are Americans, of course, in so far as we are good citizens and have contributed to building up this big, rich country of ours and we are highly regarded by our fellow-citizens. Other ethnic groups are in the same position, all are immigrants and are in ‘varying degrees of assimilation,’ not yet entirely amalgamated. Several centuries will pass before that can be realized.”<sup>93</sup>

Confident in the values transmitted by her own ethnic group, Dorthea Dahl frequently portrayed situations where selfishness and materialism threatened to quench human

relationships in the pursuit of material success. In her literature as well as through her numerous church and civic activities she was committed to the priorities she envisaged as essential for individuals as well as for local communities and for society at large: "Wherever in the world I am, in whatsoe'er estate, I have a fellowship with hearts, to keep and cultivate."<sup>94</sup>

## Notes

### Abbreviations:

HPB: Hilde Petra Brungot

NAHA: The Norwegian-American Historical Association Archives, Northfield, MN.

**Translations** from Norwegian are by the author.

**Personal papers:** The letters from the Valen family are in the care of Magne Valen-Sendstad, Valen Family Archives, Stavanger, Norway. Other correspondence, which the author used in her 1977 thesis, has been returned to family members in Norway. These materials may have been deposited in the Norwegian-American Collection at the University of Norway library in Oslo. Some letters are presently in the author's possession as stated in the footnotes.

<sup>1</sup>Dorthea Dahl, "The Foundations Have Been Laid." (Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, unpublished manuscript for a historical sketch, probably 1956), owned by HPB.

<sup>2</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Mrs. Storlie, Feb. 16, 1925 (NAHA).

<sup>3</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Katherine Blilie, May 14, 1929 (NAHA).

<sup>4</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, January 1951.

<sup>5</sup>The basic research on Dorthea Dahl was carried out during the preparation for the Candidate of Philology Degree [*engelsk hovudfag*], leading to a thesis submitted to the University of Oslo in the spring term of 1977 (Hilde Petra Brungot, *Dorthea Dahl: Norwegian-American Author of Everyday Experience*). This thesis is the main source of the biography on Dorthea Dahl, but information acquired in recent years is added, including research during a privately arranged sabbatical in 2001-2002.

<sup>6</sup>See for example, Waldemar Ager, "Miss Dorthea Dahl," *Kvartalskrift* [*Quarterly*] (*Det Norske Selskab i Amerika*) [The Norwegian Society in America], Eau Claire WI, April, July, October 1919), 58, reprinted in *Familiens Magasin* [*Family Magazine*], February 1921. "Smaanyt fra

Afholdsfolket" ["*News from Temperance Supporters*"], *Reform*, Jan. 4, 1898, and Feb. 5 and 7, 1899, as well as Temperance Movement papers, Box 4, NAHA.

<sup>7</sup>Ager, "Miss Dorthea Dahl," *Kvartalskrift*, 1919.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Peder P. Dahl to Dorthea and Arne Valen, October 28, 1905, owned by HPB.

<sup>10</sup>Homer David, *Some Recollections of Homer David, 1890-1910: Moscow Around the Turn of the Century* (Moscow, ID, Latah County Historical Society, 1966), 16.

<sup>11</sup>Clarice and Henry Sampson, "Introduction" in Homer David, *Some Recollections of Homer David, 1890-1910: Moscow Around the Turn of the Century*, (Moscow, ID, Latah County Historical Society, 1966).

<sup>12</sup>Dorthea Dahl in *Reform* (Eau Claire, WI, signed May 21 and printed June 1903).

<sup>13</sup>Letter from 'S' to *Reform* (Eau Claire, WI, February 1903).

<sup>14</sup>Dahl in *Reform*, June 1903.

<sup>15</sup>Dorthea regularly updated the relatives in Norway about her siblings: "At Berthinus and Marthe's all is well. I am enclosing a picture of their family which is taken from 'Skandinaven.' It appeared both in Norwegian and English newspapers as a curiosity owing to the unusual number of children."

<sup>16</sup>For several decades after they moved to Moscow, the Dahls continued to associate with a culturally related group, since more natives of Osen and the surrounding area, some of them relations of Lene and Peder Dahl, arrived from the Midwest as well as from Norway. Other family members, like Dorthea's elder sister Sina Marie and her husband, Nils Bue, who joined the family in Idaho in 1905, soon moved further west and settled on a homestead near Enterprise, Oregon.

<sup>17</sup>Information in Report No. 43 from Sigvald Quale Memorial Contest 1912 -1914, *Det Norske Selskab* [The Norwegian Society], Box 3 (NAHA).

<sup>18</sup>Waldemar Ager, "Ude med Skraeppen" ["*Report from a Peddler's Trip*"]. *Reform*, (Eau Claire WI, December 1911).

<sup>19</sup>Dorthea Dahl, "Nogle faa oplysninger nedtegnet 16 de desember, 1917" ["*Some information written down on December 16, 1917*"], (NAHA).

<sup>20</sup>Alma A. Gutterson and Regina Hilleboe Christensen, eds. "One of Idaho's Prominent Women in Literature," *Souvenir Norse-American Women 1825-1925* (St. Paul, MN, 1926), 330-332.

<sup>21</sup>Ager, "Miss Dorthea Dahl," *Kvartalskrift*, 1919.

<sup>22</sup>Peder P. Dahl to Dorthea Valen, January 10, 1909,

owned by HPB.

<sup>23</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, January 1951.

<sup>24</sup>Ager, "Miss Dorthea Dahl," *Kvartalskrift*, 1919.

<sup>25</sup>Dahl, "Nogle faa oplysninger," 1917.

<sup>26</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, November 27, 1945.

<sup>27</sup>Dorthea Dahl, "*Hvorledes bør ungdomsforeningen stille sig til sprog-spørgsmaalet*" ["*How the Youth Club Should Regard the Language Issue*"], *Lutheraneren*, Summer 1909, 1395-1397.

<sup>28</sup>HPB interview with Rev. Arthur Swenson in Minneapolis, MN, April 1976, and letter from Dorthea Dahl to A. A. Munn, January 25, 1949.

<sup>29</sup>Dahl, "*Nogle faa oplysninger*," 1917.

<sup>30</sup>Peder P. Dahl to Dorte Valen, November 21, 1913.

<sup>31</sup>HPB interview with Dahl's nieces Berenice Bue Juve in Moscow, ID, and Ellen Ostroot Budmunsen and Margaret Ostroot Corneliusen Tacoma, WA, May 1976.

<sup>32</sup>Dahl to Dorte Valen, September 3, 1916.

<sup>33</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Edwin Ostroot, November 24, 1942.

<sup>34</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Dorte Valen, September 3, 1916.

<sup>35</sup>Karlis Lotars Ozolins, "A History of Augsburg Publishing House," master's thesis, University of Minnesota, November 1960 - March 1961.

<sup>36</sup>O. E. Rølvaag, "*Dorthea Dahls fortællinger*," *Kvindens Magasin*, April 1916.

<sup>37</sup>Orm Øverland, *The Western Home: A Literary History of Norwegian America* (NAHA, 1966) 201.

<sup>38</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Ole E. Rølvaag, January 3, 1916. (NAHA).

<sup>39</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Dorte Valen, September 3, 1916. *Stars Over the Mission Field* is a booklet published by the Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, MN, in 1915. Dahl's story appeared on pages 52-62. The Norwegian title is *Stjerner paa Missionsmarken*.

<sup>40</sup>"The Home Daughter," unsigned article in *Lutheran Herald*, No 47, November 23, 1916, Decorah, IA, 1112-1113.

<sup>41</sup>Carlos A. Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: History of Idaho* (Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 154, and Leonard J. Arrington, *A History of Idaho*, Volume I (Moscow, ID, University of Idaho Press and Boise, ID, Idaho State Historical Society, 1994), 12-13.

<sup>42</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Dorte Valen, September 3, 1916.

<sup>43</sup>Dorthea Dahl to her sisters Sina Marie and Nellie, October 17, 1918.

<sup>44</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Nellie Dahl, May 5, 1918.

<sup>45</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, April 21, 1918.

<sup>46</sup>Ole M. Oleson, Fort Dodge, Iowa, to Dorthea Dahl, December 23, 1918 (NAHA).

<sup>47</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Dorte Valen, September 3, 1916.

<sup>48</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, April 21, 1918.

<sup>49</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sina Marie and Nellie, April 4, 1918.

<sup>50</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sina Marie and Nellie, October 17, 1918.

<sup>51</sup>Unsigned obituaries in *Lutheraneren*, 1415, and in *Reform*, November 1918.

<sup>52</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sina Marie and Nellie, October 17, 1918.

<sup>53</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Nellie, May 5, 1918.

<sup>54</sup>HPB interview with Dahl's nieces in Moscow, ID, and Tacoma, WA, April 1976.

<sup>55</sup>Dorthea Dahl to A. A. Munn, January 25, 1949.

<sup>56</sup>Olav Redal, "Fra hverdagslivet" [From Everyday Life], *Nordmanden [The Northman]*, February 14, 1919.

<sup>57</sup>Waldemar Ager, "Returning Home," *Reform*, November 30, 1920.

<sup>58</sup>J. J. Skordalsvold, "Dorthea Dahl and Returning Home," *Lutheran Church Herald*, 1921.

<sup>59</sup>Nellie Dahl to Dorte Valen, September 1, 1923, owned by HPB.

<sup>60</sup>Unsigned report, "*Kirkekrønike: Moscow norsk lutherske menighet, Moscow, Idaho*" ["*Church Chronicle: Moscow Norwegian Lutheran Church, Moscow, Idaho*"], *Lutheraneren*, 7 March 1923, 305.

<sup>61</sup>Obituary "Peder P. Dahl," *Lutheraneren*, April 1, 1925, 402; *The Daily Star-Mirror*, February 23, 1925; and *The Idaho Post*, February 27, 1925.

<sup>62</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, March 14, 1926.

<sup>63</sup>Alma A. Gutttersen and Regina Hilleboe Christensen, eds. "One of Idaho's Prominent Women in Literature," *Souvenir Norse-American Women 1825-1925*, (St. Paul, MN, 1926), 330-332.

<sup>64</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, March 14, 1926.

<sup>65</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, November 25, 1937, owned by HPB.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Anne Marie Tangjerd-Peterson to Mrs. Storlie, January 31, 1925, NAHA, Centennial Papers.

<sup>68</sup>Anne Marie Tangjerd-Peterson to O. E. Rølvaag, February 28, 1927, Rølvaag papers Box 2, NAHA.

<sup>69</sup>Dorthea Dahl to A. A. Munn, August 23, 1925, owned by HPB.

<sup>70</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Anne Marie Tangjerd-Peterson, January 19, 1930, NAHA.

- <sup>71</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, November 25, 1937.  
<sup>72</sup>Dorthea Dahl to A. A. Munn, January 25, 1949.  
<sup>73</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, November 25, 1937.  
<sup>74</sup>Dorthea Dahl to A. A. Munn, January 25, 1949.  
<sup>75</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, December 1951.  
<sup>76</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>77</sup>Ibid. WSC, Washington State College, later became Washington State University.  
<sup>78</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, December 12, 1950.  
<sup>79</sup>HPB interview with Dorothy Chandler, Spokane, WA, and Tacoma, WA, April 1976.  
<sup>80</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, November 25, 1937.  
<sup>81</sup>Morten Luvaas to Sigrid Valen, December 18, 1956.  
<sup>82</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, March 14, 1926.  
<sup>83</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, January 1951.  
<sup>84</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, April 23, 1952, owned by HPB.  
<sup>85</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>86</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, December 15, 1953, owned by HPB.

- <sup>87</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, December 1957.  
<sup>88</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>89</sup>Obituaries in *The Daily Idahonian*, September 12, 1958, 1; *The Coeur d'Alene Paper*, September 12, 1958; *Lutheran Herald*, October 14, 1958, 21; and *Coeur d'Alene Homes Messenger*, November 1958, 1.  
<sup>90</sup>Dorthea Dahl, "Hun vilde dele med Glæde deres Kaar" ["With Joy She Would Share Her People's Life"], *Ungdommens Ven [The Friend of the Young People]*, No 15, August 1914, 454-458.  
<sup>91</sup>Dorthea Dahl, "The Old Book Case," in *Returning Home* (Minneapolis, MN, Augsburg Publishing House, 1920), 7-29.  
<sup>92</sup>Dorthea Dahl, "Bækkens Sang" ["The Murmuring of the Creek"], *Familiens Magasin*, December 1917, 8-11.  
<sup>93</sup>Dorthea Dahl to Sigrid Valen, March 14, 1926.  
<sup>94</sup>Dorthea Dahl. "The Fellowship With Hearts," *Lutheran Church Herald*, August 1929, 1141.

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## Something about the Author

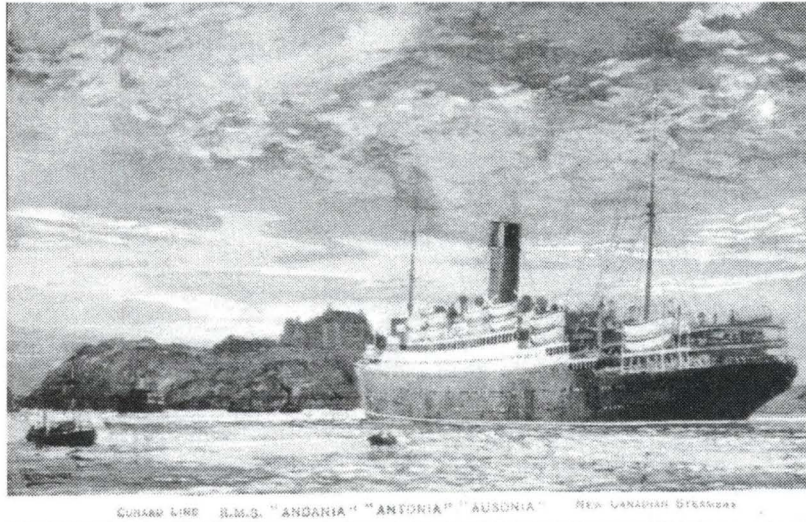
Hilde Petra Brungot taught in high school in Norway for nearly 25 years. In the spring of 1976 she visited the University of Idaho library at Moscow along with other college libraries looking for research material for her Master's Degree for the University of Oslo, Norway. Her project was the life and work of the Norwegian-American author Dorthea Dahl, the author of three books and many short stories which the Augsburg Publishing House in Minneapolis published between 1901 and 1942. In addition to doing library research, she interviewed Martin Mickey, for whom Dorthea had worked, and Berenice Juve, Dorthea's sister. The University of Oslo awarded Ms. Brungot the Agnes Mathilde Wergeland *legat* [endowment] for her thesis, which she completed in 1977.



In the early 1990s Ms. Brungot took up her research project again with the goal of revising and expanding her thesis. In October 2001 Ms. Brungot contacted us asking for additional information and inquiring if we would be interested in a contribution. This request sparked an exchange of e-mails, a manuscript, photographs, and other information that has gone into the publication of this issue.

In searching for more information, we asked our members through our newsletter to contact us if they had any information about Dorthea. This led to a most fortuitous contact with Kit Timmons who is the granddaughter of Berenice Juve, Dorthea Dahl's niece. Mrs. Timmons has shared photos, clippings, and other materials with us, including the article "Three Flags," excerpts from Dorthea's 1949 essay on contributions of Norwegians to the United States, and a letter she wrote to a grandnephew in 1952 describing her journey to America.

## A Memory of Young Immigrant



*This undated postcard of the Canadian steamship Andania was sent to Sweden. The message is written in Swedish, and signed "B. B."*

**Editor's Note:** *Dorthea Dahl wrote this letter to a great-nephew in March 1952, describing her trip to America in 1883. Donna Juve discovered the letter and retyped it. Mrs. Juve's grandmother, Sina Marie Dahl, was Dorthea's sister. It is reproduced just as Dorthea wrote it.*

Dear Dennis:

Thank you again for a very fine and interesting letter. I bet your Dad has almost as much fun with that electric train as you have.

I was two years old when I came to the USA and I must admit that I remember very little about the trip. But I was the youngest of us and your Grandmother Ostroot and your Aunt Sina and your Aunt Nellie (great-aunts, that is) were all older than I and they remembered so much and talked so much about it that I almost feel as though I remember all of it myself.

We came over in the year 1883, on a pretty big passenger boat, called the URANIA of the OLD DOMINION LINE, an English steamboat company. It was a very good boat for that period and it crossed the Atlantic Ocean in nine days. Not bad at all for so long ago. We crossed the North Sea from Oslo to a seaport on the British Isles, and then went by train across England, and then got on the big boat in Hull. My mother had

to pack enough lunch for us to last us the whole trip, all except coffee for mother and dad, and we kids got fresh milk on the boat. There was no refrigeration yet, so they had several nice big bossy cows down below on the boat to give us fresh milk. Not bad? And they had to have their own coffeepot, a copper one which your Aunt Peg has now, and Dad used to go to the ship's cook and get hot coffee for their meals. I imagine the lunch tasted a little stale at the end of nine days, but mother had baked up a lot of "flat brød" and a lot of lovely cheeses, and some cured meat, so they got by all right.

Something exciting happened that I can remember. I can to this day see myself lying on mother's lap, yelling bloody murder while a man with a black beard and eye glasses on a long black ribbon stood bending over me doing things to one of my fat little legs. I guess I was plenty hard to take care of so that mother got tired once and went down below to take a nap and left Dad to look after me. I had discovered a

tiny little place that no one else had seen, where there was an opening big enough so I could stick my foot down into it and then I got my foot caught in a cable that rotated slowly underneath. It was the real drive chain for the whole boat. Dad had yelled when he was unable to pull my foot out and sailors and stewards and all kinds of workmen had come swarming and had stopped the boat before the chain had gone far enough to cut my leg off, which is what would have happened in a few more minutes. My leg was all flattened out but the bone was soft and it rounded out again in no time. I have no memory of pain, but I can just see that man, who was the ship's doctor, as he massaged and manipulated my leg, and I can hear my voice as it soared up over all other noise and confusion.

The captain had been so frightened that his face was white, and he had said that when he got to port that ship would be condemned and would be tied up until that place had been

securely covered over so no other child would ever be hurt.

The boat docked in Quebec, being a British line, and then we came by train down by the side of the St. Lawrence River to Mayville, New York, where we lived for a year before going farther west.

That is all I can think of at present.

Love to Corinne and Nancy and yourself and all of you.

Aunt Dorthea.

PS: I should have answered your other letter before this.



*Editor's Note: This double-spaced, typed manuscript is identified only by the author's name and address on the first page. Kit Timmons donated this copy to our archives. The text is reproduced as originally written.*

### Three Flags

Before telling about the three flags, I want to sketch into the background of my story, a memory from my own childhood.

The chill of November lay over the windswept plains of Dakota Territory. In a pan on the stove, cranberries went pop-pop while the coffee pot began to emit low rumblings. Rattling stove lids and pushing twists of hay into the fire, my mother was busy preparing a meal while I was stationed at the window as watcher. The slow clop-clop, clop-clop of farm horses and the rattle of broad, steel-rimmed wagon wheels were heard and excitedly reported before the wagon swung into sight. My father and two neighbors returned from attending federal court at the county court house twenty miles away, where my father had gone to obtain his citizenship paper and the neighbors as character witnesses.

Shedding their heavy dog skin coats and long, hand-knit woollen scarves, they were soon seated at the table eating gustily of fried pork, potatoes cooked in their jackets, stacks of thin Norwegian "flat brød" with butter and homemade cheese and a generous dish of hastily sugared hot cranberry sauce, all washed down with cup after cup of steaming coffee. My father was in high good humor. After the first drive of hunger and cold had been satisfied, he turned to my mother and in Norwegian, which was always spoken between them, he said: "But, aren't you going to congratulate me as an American citizen?"

My mother, in her easy, unflurried manner, laughed and said, "Oh, all I have thought of was to have some hot food ready for you when you got back, frozen and starved." Then as an afterthought, she gave his shoulder a playful push and added, "Well, if you are a citizen then I suppose I am one also."

"Yes, you and I and the little girls. All children under twenty-one are taken in with their father, and, of course, his wife. We are all American citizens. Uncle Sam is really our uncle, too, now."

With my back to the frost-covered window, I had been a silent observer of the pleasant scene. American citizen! American citizen! A warmth from within filled my whole being. Father and the two neighbors related amusing incidents from the federal court, when a kindly judge had evidently felt that he learned more from studying my father's honest, intelligent Norwegian face than he did from his halting English, and had led him by easy steps to the coveted goal of obtaining his final papers. An American citizen! An American citizen! I was like a child of royalty who suddenly realizes the significance of his royal heritage.

It was in the flush and flashy late twenties that I suddenly as out-of-a-clear sky received a request from a cousin in Norway that I render him financial aid in coming over to America. I liked the tone of his letter and I liked the picture he enclosed of himself, and I suppose my vanity was touched by the implication that having now lived in this land of fulfillment for over half a century, the cost of the trip from Østerdalen, Norway, to Moscow, Idaho, would be but a trifle to me. The passage money went forward, and the fact that I had to borrow part of it from a more prosperous acquaintance was no affair of my Norwegian cousin's.

After the preliminaries of awaiting his turn on a long quota list, he arrived in our little Idaho town, his magnificent Viking frame encased in British tweeds, American shoes and tie, and with a snappy felt hat resting cockily on his well-brushed straw-blond hair. Speaking very little English – no Norwegian, however, will admit that he speaks no English at all, most of the younger ones having a fair reading and speaking knowledge of the language – he seemed to have come through the difficulties at Ellis Island with banners flying. The required amount of folding money was safe in his wallet.

The physical examination had seemingly consisted mainly of a shrewd look on the examining doctor's part into a pair of eyes as sparkling blue as the waters of his native fjords, and a rough, friendly grip on steel-band arm muscles, and Bernt was given a carte blanche of entrance into the promised land.

His modern Norwegian speech, rich in spicy idioms, contrasted violently with the stiff-book language of my parents of fifty years earlier, and while he was eager to acquire proficiency in the language of his new country, we received more enjoyment from listening to his colorful native speech than from tutoring him in English.

His reactions to everything American amused us. The size of America fairly appalled him. He had, he said, realized that America was hugely, unbelievably large, but he still had pictured Idaho as being a reasonably short distance beyond the city of Chicago. It was the vast distance stretching out through the middle west and over the Rockies that floored him, that he could only describe as 'kolosalt,' his rendering of colossal, a term which we borrowed and incorporated into our speech for many a year after.

Bernt went to work in the big Weyerhaeuser sawmill in the picturesque little mill-owned town of Potlatch, at a job where his powerful muscle and his quick intellect brought him what to him then seemed a fantastic wage. Refunding his passage money did not take him long, and then he began to save up for a trip back.

There was a girl there, a landscape gardener, doing a thrifty business in an Oslo suburb who had given him a limited time in which to get his 'America fever' out of his system. Then he was to return and be married and assume a position as her chief gardener. But the fever did not abate. Instead it deepened in intensity and soon had him powerless in its grip. America for him, always and forever. His task would then be to win her over instead, and bring her back with him to this country. He showed me pictures of her, snaps of her in slacks working in her gardens, in ski suits on long, smooth mountain ski runs, and in street clothes that revealed her in all the poise and

native dignity of modern young Norwegian womanhood.

He grew very definitely bothered as the time for his return trip drew near. Could he induce her to give up her business and set forth with him into the unknown? Another fear troubled the clear depth of his eyes. She was a modern among moderns, had only a scant feeling of reverence for many old traditions, including the sanctity of marriage, and was an avowed atheist. Though his religion might be pushed into a relatively unimportant place in his own life, the thought of a definitely unbelieving wife was not a pleasant one to him.

It was on a clear golden Sunday afternoon in early autumn that I first saw him after his return, jumping over the side of an old jalopy at the curb while I was entertaining a group of friends on the lawn. Introductions were made and he greeted us all in his formal, European continental manner and then started for the house to deposit his hat in the entrance hall. I followed him and asked him point blank about his girl. He tried to be noncommittal and to close his face against me, but I was insistent. Then a smile broke through, and half joyously, half apologetically he said that he had found a new girl who was to follow him to America later. She was young and sweet and pretty, and she liked America – although, of course, she had never seen it – and she was kindhearted and efficient, and – this was kept to the last – she "believed in God and everything," – to use his own expression.

That was probably very fine, but not quite enough for me. Rather sternly I asked him about his other girl, the one who had waited for him, what about her? A mere gesture disposed of her, and very little supplementary information was available. She had, to be sure, dutifully met him at the dock in Oslo, but after a fruitless attempt on both sides to recapture that which they knew had been long dead, the parting had brought mutual relief. With a freedom which must have caused him heartache and disappointment at first, he continued his journey to Østerdalen

where his people lived. And there he had found Dagny.

Months later, after the troublesome business of quota and passport had been arranged for, Dagny came. Barely turned eighteen, courageously she came over land and sea, with her high heels, her long, high school girl bob, and her fresh, joyous laughter. Only in the depth of her hazel eyes was there a trace of the loneliness and sadness which she undoubtedly felt so cut off from her own people.

Bernt had been careless about starting to move toward citizenship and even brought upon himself considerable technical difficulty in obtaining it on account of the trip he had made back to Norway and their having spent some time in British Columbia after they were married, where Bernt tried working in a smelter. Dagny was eager for them to begin preparing for it and found time to attend night school even after the babies came. Three of them. Tall, graceful Eric, named for his aviator uncle in Norway; mischievous Henry, American through and through; and beautiful, blond Astrid, strikingly like the princess royal of Norway, now exiled to the protecting arms of our own America.

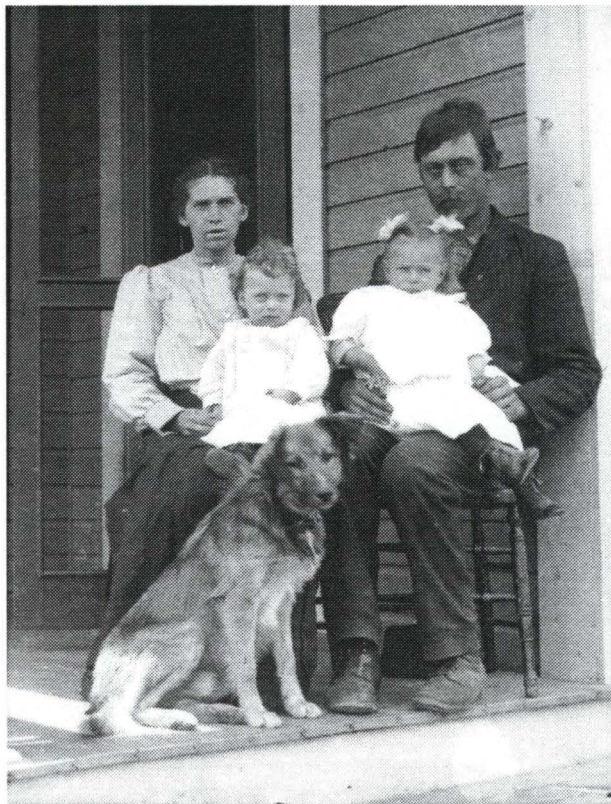
To me, there was a halo over that home in Potlatch. Within was a combination - of the saga of the Vikings and the story of our own Pilgrim Fathers. I drove there unexpectedly late one Sunday evening with a very dear friend whom I had not previously had the opportunity of showing it off. She was a student of American social conditions and knew that every house in Potlatch was

owned by a vast, rich lumber company, every man therein toiling for the company - to her a veritable slave setup. I secretly rejoice over the unforeseen circumstances which brought us there together. The evening was very warm, and as we turned the corner by the little five-room cottage across from the large company-owned Potlatch General Hospital, we saw Bernt and Dagny sitting on the steps leading to the small, square porch; he in a soft white shirt and clean pearl grey slacks, and she in a cool, sheer, fluffy dress with her hair tied up with a ribbon, and her feet in cool sandals.

They placed chairs on the porch for us, but I contrived to bring my friend into the house so she could see the immaculate neatness inside, the comfortable, upholstered furniture, the rugs, the shiny plumbing and the modern refrigerator and radio - and the pictures of their loved ones back in Norway. A deftly worded remark or two on my part, inserted with a purpose, led Bernt to enlarge in his somewhat sketchy, though on the whole quite adequate English, upon the fine, humane way in which the Weyerhaeuser company treated its people, their pension and sick-aid system, and so on. Dagny at once disappeared into the kitchen, and we were soon ushered out on the now cooling porch to partake of the delectable lunch she had magically produced, and to drink her clear, brown coffee.

Had my friend been gathering material for an article on social conditions among exploited, foreign-born laborers, she found

little material in that home.



*An unidentified family on the porch of a house built by the Potlatch Company for its workers. A large number of mill workers and lumberjacks were Scandinavian immigrants. Photo donated by Lee Gale.*

I regretted deeply that I was kept from attending the court where they were granted their citizenship. The federal immigration examiner had harried them considerably. It was an all-day undertaking to put the thirteen applicants through their paces. Bernt had got through somehow in the forenoon, but Dagny was among those to be examined after court reconvened for the afternoon session. Of the thirteen, she was last.

The court room was warm, and the examiner was growing tired. Nervously flipping his pages back and forth, he had difficulty in finding questions not already asked of the others. With hands clenched and perspiring, Dagny took the grilling, answering some questions correctly, others haltingly. Then came a question in regard to the right of Congress to pass *ex post facto* laws, which left her petrified. She knew the term had come up in night school, but could recall nothing connected with it.

Taking a renewed grip on herself, she thought of the reports from congressional activities which she read constantly in the *Spokesman-Review*, that big Spokane daily which is found in well-nigh every home in northern Idaho. She had certainly not seen any mention of such a law, so in a faint voice and with parched lips, she started to say that Congress had no such right, when Judge Cavanah of Coeur d'Alene, who presided over the court at Moscow that time, brought down his gavel. "That is a question which might stump more legally trained minds," he said. "I am calling a halt to this examination right now, and I hereby declare this little lady to be well qualified for American citizenship."

I was invited to their home to spend Christmas Day some two years later. They had, for a very slight increase in the rent they paid the company, moved into a larger house where Astrid could have a room of her own, and where they all enjoyed the freedom of greater space. There was Christmas everywhere. The boys had trimmed a tree for their own room, and Astrid had one in hers, while a large glittering one occupied a large corner in their living room. Bernt was left to watch sundry simmering and

sputtering dishes in the oven and on top of the stove while Dagny and the children and I went to the Christmas service in the little Lutheran church. Two plump brown chickens came out of the oven for our dinner, two golden pumpkin pies came down from the pantry shelf, and everything else belonging to a traditional American Christmas dinner found its way to the table after our return from the very beautiful, impressive service.

Sitting at ease in the cozy living room after dinner, I noticed three American flags in a brown pottery urn standing in the large archway leading out to the dining room. Something led me to remark on that, and Astrid was ready to give me the information. "They belong to us kids," she said – words and intonation very definitely juvenile all-American. "Mama gave them to us the first Fourth of July after." "The first Fourth of July after what, Honey?" "Oh, you know, after we got to be American citizens. There was a big parade and us kids marched in it and waved our flags."

Her interest turned to a very beautiful wool novelty headpiece sent to her by her aunt in Sacramento, which she insisted on wearing all day long, despite the warmth of the room. The business about waving flags was very matter-of-fact to her, but I had to swallow a lump in my throat before I could say anything further.

Then there was another thing which attracted my attention. On the lower shelf of a little coffee table in front of the davenport lay a shining new Bible on top of a very worn one. I got the story of that also. Dagny, who "believed in God and everything" had charge of the family's religious observance it seemed and had been in the habit of reading the Christmas story on Christmas Eve from her Norwegian Bible, which had been a gift at her confirmation.

When they became American citizens, she purchased a beautifully bound English Bible and gave it to Eric as his Christmas gift. Following their custom, they had again gathered before the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve and then Dagny read the story of the first Christmas in

her somewhat hesitating English. After that they were to sing their carols and the children were asked to recite little Christmas pieces learned at school. But when she finished her reading, Eric tiptoed over to her and laid her old Bible in her lap, saying: "Now you read out of that, too, Mama. First in English, because now we are Americans, and then in Norwegian, the way you always did before."

Going home on the crowded bus that evening, scenes flitted past my eye from the busy, happy day just ending. I saw Bernt's proud grin when I played Chinese checkers with the children or

admired the furnishings in his home. I saw the radiant faces of the children when they showed me their many gifts, or treasured possessions in their neatly kept rooms, and I recalled Dagny's warm hospitality.

But clearer than all was the symbolism of the two Bibles, the shining English one lying on top of the well worn Norwegian one, and the three American flags, standing proudly in their urn, one for each child. And with Judge Cavanah, I felt that the mother in that home was well qualified for American citizenship.

**Editor's Note:** *Dorthea Dahl made this speech in 1949. Donna Juve who passed it on to her daughter, Kit Timmons, stated that neither the occasion nor the location were known. Following are two excerpts on religious and social contributions from the speech. The reference to "heathendom," which may be offensive to modern readers, should be viewed in the time period and the personal, religious beliefs of the author. The text appears as originally written.*

**The Contribution Made by Scandinavians  
to Life in the USA  
A Talk Given in August 1949**

**Religious Contribution**

To bring to mind life among Scandinavian pioneers in this country is to call to mind the early years of the various bodies of our Lutheran Church in America. For as these our pioneers broke the sod to make their homes, and felled the



*The Norwegian Lutheran Church in Moscow. It was moved from its original location at Second and Van Buren Streets to Howard and Third Streets. It was used by Norwegian Lutherans until 1927 and then razed in 1930.*

trees in the forest, they thought not only of a home to shelter them and their families, or fields from which they could make their daily living. No, they thought of bringing their Church with them, their faith, their God. So, crude buildings went up simultaneously with the homes, buildings to be used as churches, for the perpetuation of their faith, and the honor of their God.

Not only churches. To an amazing degree their plans included schools of higher learning, where their sons and daughters might be trained in ways of Christian living and their own young men might be trained for the ministry. And as our fathers and mothers labored and sacrificed to build their homes, so the early pioneer pastors truly labored and sacrificed to bring the word of God to these, their own people. So different from the fictionalized type of the circuit riders, those early Lutheran pastors were men of education and culture, men of a recognized and honored profession back in the homeland, who gave up all and came to serve our people here, as truly missionaries as those who go into dark heathendom.

Now we hedge our church schools about with all the security possible. We have to have large endowment funds so we can hold our own with the tax-supported schools of the state. The men who founded St. Olaf, or Luther College, or Gustavus Adolphus, had only one endowment – they had FAITH AND COURAGE, and who can say that they did not lay a secure foundation?

I well remember the day when my father came back from our nearest town in South Dakota, 13 miles away, driving with oxen, of course, and told my mother that he had heard in town that there was a Norwegian minister in the county seat, Webster, who was coming to our settlement to preach and to look up the people.

My mother dropped into a chair and threw her blue-and-white gingham apron up over her face and wept. Tears of joy, tears of rejoicing. Because the Lord had not forgotten His people, He was sending His messenger to look them up.

Mother became the first president of the Ladies Aid; gave our beautiful calico for men's shirts. Language – of course Norwegian – how else could the church have been preserved and given growth in the remarkable degree which it had. Now, we, all of America, reap the benefit of that pioneer work which those consecrated early day ministers of the gospel did, using the only language which the settlers knew. Perhaps we held on to tile foreign language too long in some places; pernaps it was not easy to know when the time was ripe for a change, but this we did not know.

The Lutheran Church in America, now third in size in this country, owes its strength and vitality to that foundation which was laid in the language of the hearts of tile listeners of that day. And our Lutheran Church has performed a great mission here and will continue to be a powerful influence on life in these United States.

### Social Contribution

Ah, there we really scored! From the old American tradition of three square meals per day, no nibbling between meals, we now see – as we

go down the streets in the middle of the forenoon and the middle of the afternoon, cafes and lunch counters and drug store counters filled with people, learning the value of the midmorning, or mid-afternoon coffee. For one thing, we have taught the USA to drink coffee, till now we here outrank any country in that enjoyment.

Farmers seeing their Scandinavian neighbors getting lunch brought to them in the field, forenoon and afternoon, first wondered, laughed a little, grew wistful about it, till now no farmer ever expects his field hands to live and labor and do efficient work on merely the three squares. No, the between-meal lunches and snacks are well established in American life. Afternoon teas are held with not a leaf of tea visible – all coffee. Friendly, hospitable, helpful, sharing with one another, that is our social asset, that is our social contribution.

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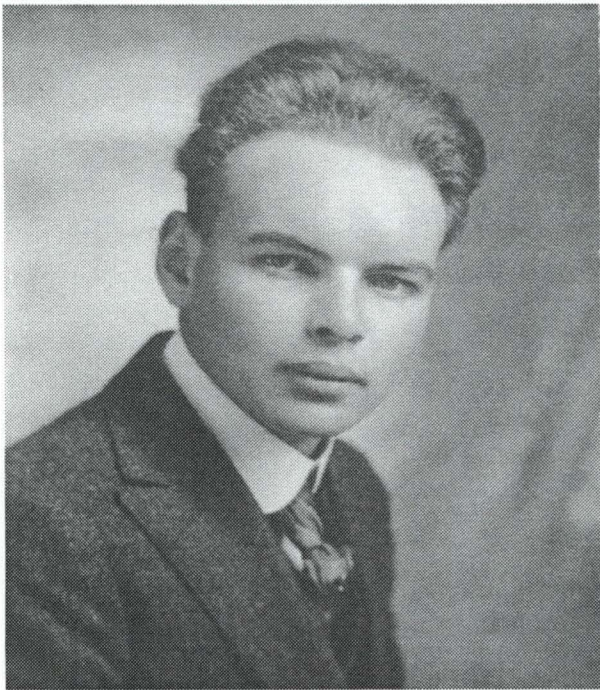
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*Johnnie's Restaurant was a popular gathering spot at 226 West Sixth Street in Moscow. Johnnie Jabbora, the sone of a Syrian immigrant, opened it in 1938 on the sites of his father's livery stable.*

## Henrik Dahl Juve and Berenice Bue Juve Two Norwegian Connections

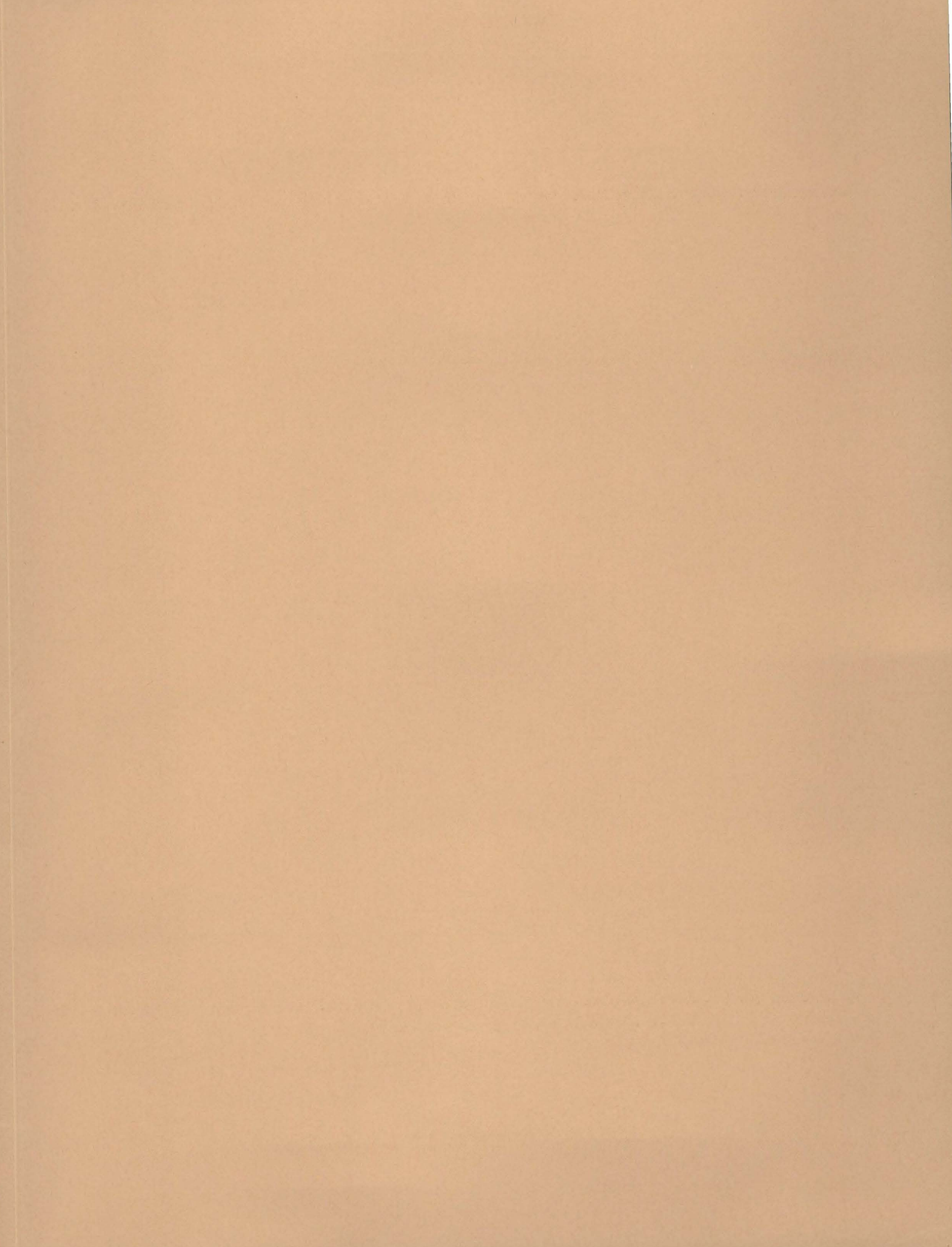
Berenice Juve was a well-known Moscow resident who passed away last April at the age of 100 years. Her mother, Sina Marie Dahl, was Dortha Dahl's sister, and her father was Nels K. Bue. She married Henrik Dahl Juve on October 13, 1923, and they lived in Enterprise, Oregon where Berenice taught all eight grades in a one-room schoolhouse for 14 years. In 1937 she and Henrik moved to Moscow. Both Berenice and Henrik were writers. Berenice wrote many short stories, poems, and articles, and Henrik, who died in 1990 at the age of 89, was a noted, early writer of science-fiction. Berenice was also very active in the Latah County Historical Society. Henrik and Berenice's granddaughter, Kit Timmons, shared these photographs of her grandparents with us. They were both 16 years of age at the time they were photographed.











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In 1968 dedicated volunteers organized the Latah County Historical Society to collect, preserve, and interpret materials connected with Latah County's history. If you would like to assist us in this work, we cordially invite you to become a member. Subscriptions to this journal and a discount on books we have published are included in membership dues. The membership categories and dues are as follows:

	<b>Member</b>	<b>Friend</b>	<b>Contributor</b>		<b>Sustainer Patron</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
<b>Individual</b>	\$10-15	\$16-30	\$31-75	\$76-150	\$151-499	\$500 up
<b>Family</b>	\$15-25	\$26-50	\$51-100	\$101-250	\$251-499	\$500 up
<b>Business</b>	\$25-50	\$51-100	\$101-250	\$251-350	\$351-499	\$500 up

*\*Note: For Canada and Mexico, add \$4; for other countries, add \$8.*

Privileges are identical for all classes; the higher categories and sliding scales are available to those wishing to make a donation above the basic membership dues. We sincerely appreciate these donations which help us provide our many public services. Dues are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

**The services of the Latah County Historical Society** include maintaining the McConnell Mansion Museum with historic rooms and changing exhibits, actively collecting and preserving materials on Latah County's history, operating a research library of historical and genealogical materials, collecting oral histories, and sponsoring educational events and activities. Historical materials relating to Latah County are added to the collections, made available to researchers, and preserved for future generations. If you have items to donate or lend for duplication, please contact us.

**Our library and offices** are in Centennial Annex, 327 East Second St., Moscow; hours are Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The McConnell Mansion Museum is open May through September, Tuesday through Saturday, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., and October through April, Tuesday through Saturday, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Museum visits at other times can be arranged by calling (208) 882-1004. Admission is free to members, and donations are requested for non-members. Our FAX number is (208) 882-0759 and our e-mail address is <lchlibrary@moscow.com>. The Mansion's first floor is handicapped accessible. Researchers who cannot access the Annex can request information by mail or by e-mail. Research materials can also be made available at the nearby Moscow Library.

**For current or additional information**, please visit our web site at <<http://users.moscow.com/lchs>>.