

# **Laugen History**

**By**

**Anna Hostvet Larson**

Anna Hostvet Larson, age 73 at the time of this writing, was the oldest one living of the Laugen-Hostvet relationship around here [Southeastern Minnesota]. Will begin with Grandfather Laugen who was born in Veggli, Numedal, Norway, November 27, 1833. His dad's name was Ole Kongsjorden Laugen, and mother's, Anna Thraaen. There were ten children in that family namely: Gullick, Gunnar, Anna, Kjersti, Halvor, Ole O., Gunhild, Anstine, Torgun, and Ole E. Halvor and Gunhild died in Norway.

Grandfather Ole O. Laugen came to America by way of the St. Lawrence River and Quebec in the year of 1850. Most immigrants came by way of New York. He settled in Rock County near Broadhead, Wisconsin. He must have had several relatives there as there are so many Laugens buried at Luther Valley Church cemetery. (Reference to burials will be made later on.) Kongsjorden name was changed to Laugen in reference to a river in Norway by a similar name.

Grandmother Laugen was born Ambjor Sateren, December 10, 1839, daughter of Even Evenson Sateren and Jorand Sateren. Grandmother had two sisters, namely: Randa and Jorand. Since Ambjor was the oldest, her parents lived with the Laugens till they passed away.

Great Grandfather Even died very suddenly. My father (Anfin Hostvet) picked him up from the floor where he fell off the chair after having had supper. He was carried into the bedroom. They called Jorand Anderson, Adolph Anderson's mother, that same evening. She got the body ready for burial. I was four years old at the time and remember going upstairs with Mother when she got shirts and underwear out of Great Grandfather's trunk to dress the body in.

Even had a bedroom downstairs where he spent a lot of time reading religious books. Then he would take a walk up on a little hill by the barn and sit down for awhile and look out over the valley. He did not like organ music, so when Great Grandfather was out, Torgun and Mother would watch their chance to play the organ.

Great Grandmother Sateren died sixteen years before Even, so she lived only four years on the new Laugen homestead. They came with a covered wagon in 1869 from Rock County, Wisconsin. They brought along two cupboards just alike: Onsgards have one and I have one in the basement and use it for storing sauce cans. Mother got the cupboards when she and Dad moved to Oak Ridge in 1882. Even Evenson Sateren also brought along machinery such as plows and cattle. They came by Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin. The last night's stop was at Badger springs.

Grandfather Laugen came from Rock County to Houston in July 1869. New settlers had come in 1866. The southern railroad came as far as Rushford which had been in operation for only three years. Grandfather bought 320 acres from Sigurd Anderson, who was the same age as Laugen. Anderson came to America in 1853. The next year he came with two homestead seekers who bought 160 acres of the Anderson homestead which is now the Lawrence Anderson farm.

Grandfather Laugen's farm is now owned by Mrs. Melvin Wilson.

Three hundred Indians camped near the river and slough. They were not troublesome. I can remember hearing their war whoop dance, hooting and hollering from their camp area to our home up on Oak Ridge. We children were not allowed to go along when Dad and Uncles Oscar and Ed visited the Indians. One day, four of the squaws came to Laugen's to sell baskets. Grandma Laugen fixed up a plate of cookies to pass around to treat, but the old squaw scooped them all into her basket.

There were several maple trees on the Laugen homestead. I remember going with Mother and Dad down to the bottoms and rowed across some water, and there were water lilies, one of which they picked for me. I must have been five years old.

Back to Grandma Laugen: she came from Norway when she was five years old and settled in the east where she learned to talk English and cook American food. She talked with an Eastern brogue. She could bake just lovely pies and cookies and was noted for her cooking and good housekeeping. Mother said they always rubbed the clothes in two waters and had lovely white clothes. We do not know why they settled in Rock County. It must have been because of the many families from Numedal, Norway.

Ole O. Laugen, age 26, and Ambjor Sateren (Evenson) were married November 9, 1859 at Luther Valley. They farmed there for ten years. Their oldest daughter, Torgun (Urheim) was born October 8, 1860; Isabell (Hostvet) on October 17, 1862; Ole was born April 21 and died April 28, 1864; Anna (Onsgard) was born June 13, 1866; Oscar was born April 18, 1869. Grandmother came with Torgun, Isabell, Anna and Oscar, who was three months old, on the train to Houston. Isabell, my mother, was nearly seven years old. She remembers them moving, but she never got back to the country they left at Luther Valley. She said as they drove along the road they threw their broom to a neighbor that came out to see them off. It would be fun to hunt up the old homestead sometime. I don't think the land was as fertile there as in Houston County.

The Laugen homestead had part of the house as it stands, which was three rooms. So Grandfather built on a kitchen, bedroom, and pantry; also a cemented rain water cistern under the kitchen floor. That was the way people fixed it handy for water at that time, with a pump in the kitchen sink. I remember that the old pump had to be primed all the time. The cistern under the floor made the kitchen cold and damp. A summer kitchen was built with a hallway between the kitchen and the new addition. The hallway served as a wash area. The old part of the house was taken for a parlor and two bedrooms: one a spare and one for Grandfather Evenson.

Grandfather and Grandmother Laugen were blessed with five more children: Edward, born September 18, 1862; Joran, March 19, 1875 and died January 15, 1876. Mother said she was the last one to make Joran smile. She carried her into the parlor and showed her a large picture hanging on the wall; she died at the age of ten months. Johan was born August 6, 1877 and died March 5, 1883 of scarlet fever. His sister Torgun (Urheim) lost her first child, Helen Agnes, from scarlet fever. She was brought to Laugen's before the burial. Not knowing how contagious it was, little care was taken in transmitting the sickness. Most of the rest were quite sick with it, including Anna (Onsgard). Mother lived on Oak Ridge [so] Regina and I were spared that sickness. At that time I was five months old and Regina was three and a half years. Clara Regina

was born May 5, 1880 and Johan, the tenth and last child, was born June 15, 1883. He was named after his brother who died.

Grandfather Laugen was a very good farmer. He used his head as well as his hands. He had a lot of nice livestock. Butchers from Houston would come out and buy prime beef for slaughter. He also had sheep and would send the wool to the Rushford woolen mills where they ordered stripes and plaids to be made for men's shirts and ladies' dresses. Woolen blankets were made of homegrown wool. These were hard and rather stiff and sure lasted a long time. Mother got some when she moved to Oak Ridge. She also got beds, cupboards; Dad got sleds, harnesses, and other needs.

Grandfather had a big barn built along the side of the hill so as to be able to drive in with hay loads. There was a bridge from the hill into the barn. The lower level was for horses and cattle. The cattle barn was very dark, being it was built into the side of the hill and had only small windows to the east. One day Clara, John and I were playing upstairs in the barn when I fell through a hay chute and fell into the manger of a black horse. It got so scared he broke loose and ran out the door. Dad came in to see, and there I was crying in the horse manger, scared to death.

The barn was so huge. It had a tool room we loved to go in and look around. Our folks would not let us in, only when some grown-ups were along. Guess we three used to be some rascals to climb. I remember we used to stand in a wagon box and tease the old buck sheep till he got so mad he would bump against the box. Then we would laugh. John was up to tricks anyway. There was a dry run between the house and some of the farm buildings. One day, Dad came from town and I ran to meet him as usual. He gave me a sugar package to carry in. Here came that buck and butts me into that dry run. I busted the package, besides getting another scare.

The fall of 1891, Laugens raised so many pumpkins. There was a huge pile out by the house. It was Edward, Clara, John and my job to cut them up and we had to haul them to the cows. We thought it a lot of fun just to see that big pile of yellow and green pumpkins.

There were no parochial schools, so every forenoon around 9 or 10 o'clock, or when the ladies had the morning work done, it was to call us in for our religious instruction. I remember John got so tired of being called in since he would rather play. Then it was to sit by Mother's knee and learn our lessons. The Laugens were religious people and were regular church goers and no dancing. I remember Mother telling when she went with Dad there was a dance on Oak Ridge. Mother did not want him to go, but Dad seems was the life of the party back in Norway, according to his sister Aunty Ragnhild. He still liked a good time in America. But that dance turned out to be so rough it cured Dad from dance parties. Dad did not drink, so he liked to keep order, but had to flee from that group. They picked up big sticks of wood to pound each other, they got so drunk and rough.

Grandfather Laugen lived on the Laugen homestead for 18 years. He was only 54 when he died on September 12, 1887. He and some men were breaking colts. A gray horse named Charley raised up as Grandfather held him by the bit. The horse's knees ruptured his stomach inside. They had a doctor from LaCrosse, but in four days he died. He suffered a lot. If it had been now, he could have gotten help right away.

Then Grandmother Laugen died four months later on January 29, 1888. Seems she had asthma and had been doctoring with a LaCrosse doctor. This must have been on a Sunday as Rev. Jaastad was there for dinner, as he was accustomed to stop at Laugen's a good deal when he came to hold services in the Stone Church. And Grandmother was to take communion after dinner. She must have lain on the couch. When they came in she had died of a heart attack: Oscar was not yet 19, Ed was 16, Clara was 8, John was about 6 years old. They were too young to run that big farm, so my dad and mother moved down from Oak Ridge in the fall of 1887 and stayed at Laugen's till the spring of 1892. Mother said they helped the young folk out for four and a half years.

Father was a good manager and a very hard worker. When he left Laugen's, fences and everything was in tip-top shape. Dad made nice big swinging gates for the driveways. He was very handy both with hammer and saw, also masonry work.

I commenced school the last year at Laugen's, but can't remember the teacher's name, something like McLeod. Clara and John went, also. Clara was like a sister to me. She died in 1903 at the age of 23 from tuberculosis. Passed away at the homestead in Grandfather Even's room.

So many Valley farmers bought extra land on the Ridge. Grandfather Laugen bought of Johan Braaten Christoferson a hundred acres on November 26, 1879. Also bought 33 acres from Sigurd Anderson where the water spring is. When Dad and Mother were married on March 8, 1882, Grandfather Laugen gave them the Oak Ridge farm. Seems they valued it to \$1,000.00 as that is what he gave Torgun in money when she was married to Dr. Urheim around 1880. Then Dad bought the west 40 acres from Halgrim & Rovrud. Halgrim was grandparent to Truls Trulson. So Dad's farm consisted of 173 acres.

Our oldest sister Regina was born November 27, 1882. When she was nearly three and a half years, Dad gave her two pennies. As he was going to town, she asked him to buy her candy for the pennies. Dad said, "I will buy your candy, just keep the pennies." She was sitting on the bed and Mother was sweeping the floor. All of a sudden she commenced to choke. Here she had swallowed a penny. In six week time she died. Her left side had lost all feeling and had turned yellow. Dr. Johnson from Houston thought the penny had lodged somewhere and poisoned her whole system. I was 8 months old. Mother often talked of Regina and wished she had lived. Did not have a picture of her.

At that time the house had only one large room and a summer kitchen where the stairway went up. I can well remember the room. Dad bought a table from Braaten. Grandfather Laugen built the granary on the Oak Ridge farm. A log house from the Valley farm, which stood near the Lewis Laugen farm, was moved up to the Ridge farm. Men rolled down the logs of the log house and hauled them up and rolled them up. This part was still the kitchen for the length of the life of the house. When we moved back on Oak Ridge in March 1892, Dad had the west part built onto the kitchen. Sortungstad was the carpenter; Thronson, Enil's dad, did the painting. Dad and Mother bought new furniture for the front room.

I was the oldest [remaining], born September 29, 1885, in the kitchen of our one-room house,

except for one room upstairs. Emma was born at Laugen's on December 26, 1888, after Dad and Mother had moved back there in the fall of 1887. It happened so that Dr. Onsgard came to see Anna Laugen, Mother's sister, at Christmas time. He used to tease Emma saying he was the first one to see her. I think the Onsgards got married that next spring. Olga was born May 27, 1892, in what we called the "old room," the room above the one room. We were so disappointed that Jane was not a boy. Anton arrived after having five girls.

We were such a happy family, but then tragedy struck in 1900. Dad planned to build a new barn. This day he hauled in straw in the forenoon and got warm. After dinner he commenced hauling home rock from the quarry over on the bluff for the new barn. I went to Onsgards that day to stay a few days as it was during the holidays. Early on the first of January, Oscar Loken came for Dr. Onsgard saying my dad was so sick. It sure gave me a shock. I went home with Doctor. He pronounced Dad's ailment as pneumonia and it was the third time had it. He died January 9, 1900 after having been sick for nine days. He kept on improving every day so we had good hopes for him. But the morning of the ninth day his fever started to come up, [he] became unconscious in the afternoon, and died at nine o'clock that night. We called our neighbor Hans Loken and also Doctor and his driver came at supper time. Doctor thought so much of Dad and said that it was harder to see him go than to lose his own dad.

It was such a blow to Mother as she was not strong and depended so much on Dad. I am sure Mother had gallstones as well as a kidney stone. Then on May 30, 1900, she too died. We all had mumps, including Mother. That poisoned her so she got bumen in her kidneys. A seven month old baby boy was born to her the 29th of May at nine o'clock in the morning. Mother died the 30th at nine o'clock. Everything by nine. She said all that happens at nine o'clock is by God's will. Baby lived four hours and was baptized Anfin. He was buried in the same coffin with Mother. Such a sad funeral. Emma and I were dressed in all black. Olga and Jane in all white. Clara walked with Anton who was two and a half years old.

Ole Erickson, Obert's dad, worked for us that summer and we had several hired girls. Aunt Clara stayed a while and taught me some about making meals. I was fourteen and a half; Emma was eleven; Olga was eight; Jane was five; and Anton was two and a half. When I was sixteen, I had full charge of housework, help outdoors, milked cows, husked corn. But I was blessed with good health. Emma started teaching school when she was seventeen years old.

Grandfather's brother, Anstine Laugen of Rushford, was married twice. His first wife died and left a little girl named Tolla. His second wife was Valbor Berland, Mrs. Ed Laugen's aunt. They had ten children. Uncle Anstine was a soldier in the war of 1862. His regiment was ordered to walk 100 miles to view the remains of President Abe Lincoln. His brother Little Ole Laugen, Una Anderson's father, was also a soldier in the Civil War. He had been married three times before he was thirty years old. His first wife was Grandmother Laugen's sister. He went to Norway for his third wife. Ten children were born to them. Ole lived in Rushford and was a wagon maker by trade.

Tolla Laugen married Halvor Nelson. They had two children, Ella and Alfred. He is in Washington, D.C. with the Army service.

Anstine Laugen of Rushford had three Ingas: one died of diphtheria; one was scalded by hot water that was to be used for calf feed; the third Inga was Mrs. Swenson in Rushford.

Anstine Laugen of Emmons, Minnesota came to America alone when he was sixteen. His dad died suddenly either of a stroke or a heart attack. The Kongsjorden homestead is by the Laugen River on a little hill. Great Grandfather had gone to the river for water. They found him dead at the edge of the water. His wife left for American with Little Ole. She got cholera on the boat and lived only a week after coming to America in 1854. They came to Rock Prairie, Wisconsin.

Then Gullick Laugen, Little Ole's brother in Rushford, raised him. Vavar Kjersti Anderson, Grandfather's sister, came to America with three daughters, leaving her husband in Norway. Her children were Trine (Mrs. Skaar); Margit (Mrs. Hendrickson); and Olava (Mrs. Syvert Severson). Olava, her husband, and baby all died in the same year of tuberculosis. Kjersti owns her own home next to Melvin Laumbs in Rushford. She weaves rugs for a living.

Ole G. Laugen, who is Gullick's son, was born in LaCrosse. He died October 26, 1878. He married Kari Helbransdatter who was born March 1852 in Numedal, Norway. Children born are Gustave O. in 1872; Marie Randine on January 24, 1874; Elbertina on August 14, 1876; and Ole Kristian in March 1879.

Halvor Kongsjorden's children were Anstine, married to Anna Opsahl; and Engebret who remained single. Gunnulf and Sigrid were both married.

Kjersti Lofthus had two sons, Herbran and Halvor.

Our Dad, Anfin Hostvet, was born in Nore, Numedal on February 3, 1855 and came to America at twenty years of age. He came with his Aunt, Mrs. Tosten Olson, who was Mrs. Ellen Almquist's mother. He worked for Laugen when Mother was a young girl. They used to make fun of that newcomer: he was so fat and rosy cheeked. But by and by, she fell in love with him. Custom in Norway was for the better class of people not to marry a hired hand of one of a poorer class. Dad's parents were poor. They worked for a big farmer. They had a couple of cows and a plot of land to raise their garden crops. So Dad felt he must not fall in love with his landlord's daughter. But in America it was different. Grandfather and Grandmother Laugen liked Dad as he was a very good worker and a kind hearted man. I thought a world of Dad, so too bad he could not have lived with us longer.

In the winter Dad went to Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin to work in the Pine Woods. He built a road in the woods for hauling logs. He got sweaty and caught a hard cold, which turned into pneumonia. He lay deathly sick in a shack that was open so that snow would blow in through the cracks. This was the second time he had had pneumonia; the first time was when he was little in Norway.

Dad's parents were Johan Hostvet and Ragnhild. Grandma Hostvet had some teeth pulled after which an infection set in, causing her death. Grandfather Hostvet married again to his oldest daughter's mother-in-law. She made life unpleasant for him. He died of pneumonia. He was the complaining kind, but Grandma looked at the brighter side of life. She was a good singer. Young folks used to gather there to hear her sing.

She had a brother Jermon who was a fortune teller and handy at fixing clocks. Jermon died in California, a bachelor. He was thought to have been wealthy, but we did not see any of his money. Torkel settled near Hawley, Iowa [should be Minnesota]. Aunty Ragnhild visited them in 1897. They lived in a small log house not far from Uncle Halvor. One brother was Anfin Anfinson who owned a lot of land on this side of the Stone Church, now the farm of W. Roy Anderson. It was his daughter who was Mrs. Gunder Skree. She was Father's first cousin and a very lovely person. She was Anton Skree's mother. A sister, Mrs. Tosten Margrit Olson, Ellen Almquists's mother and her husband came from Norway as newlyweds. They went to Anfin Anfinson. Don't know if Grandma had any more brothers or sisters.

My dad had two brothers: Halvor and Torkel. Three sisters were Ragnhild who lived in Broadhead, Wisconsin; and Berget who married E. Engebretson. She skated across the fjord one winter afternoon for groceries. She went too far out of her way on her trip home and skated into an airhole. Groceries were scattered on the ice. She left seven children. Dad thought that was so very sad to hear. His third sister was Guri who just disappeared. She went out with a boy of wealthy people which was against Norway's rules for the rich to marry the poor.

Uncle Halvor married a widow with five children and he had three children. Helmer died when he was fifteen years old in 1907. Hjalmer died of a heart attack around twenty years ago (1938) and left a wife and two children. Alfred lives in Minneapolis; he is a bridge foreman.

Ragnhild married a painter, Andrew Anderson, who had been at Drammen, Norway, to learn painting. But his weakness was drinking, which made his family life miserable. Aunty had to wash clothes for a living nearly all her married life. But she lived to the ripe old age of 91 years. She was the oldest in the family. She was such a lovely person. People said she was a ray of sunshine. She had five children. Came from Norway with three. One the oldest had read the Bible through at twelve years old. He died at the age of sixteen years. Gina died after effects of rheumatic fever at the age of twelve. John went west and was never heard from again. Andrew and Carrie still live in Illinois.

When Dad was eight years old, he had to leave home and be on his own. In the summer he went with the Saterjenten girl that took the cattle up on the mountains for all summer. There she milked and made butter, primost, and cheese. It was Dad's job to follow the cattle out in the pasture. There were no fences, so they had to be watched or they would stray too far from their corral. Sometimes it would storm or rain, so his clothing was wet for days. Also was in \_\_\_\_ of wild beasts. His food was mush: morning, noon, and night. The girl would hand him a bowl and he would milk a goat for milk for his porridge. He said it got so tiresome to eat the same food day in and day out. Aunty Ragnhild had the same work. She, too, was on her own when eight years old. Their parents were so poor they could not clothe and feed them any longer then necessary.

Grandma Hostvet followed Ragnhild on the road to the place where she was to work. She had a whip in her hand and said, "Now, don't you dare to come home again." Ragnhild said it was a good thing because she was so homesick and lonesome at first, but did not dare to go home. Ragnhild was not well much of the time from when she was fourteen and a half years. They thought it was because she froze so much. She was such a good worker; she worked for two

people. One came to visit us on Oak Ridge after our parents died. One time before that, Dad sent her money so she and Carrie and Andrew came to Laugen's for a visit. She said my mother there had a big family to feed. Torgun and two children were there visiting. There were Oscar, Ed, Clara, John, myself, Emma, Mother, Dad, and Hineman. I remember how John and Andrew would wreck our playhouse we had in a field by the corn crib. We sure had a lot of fun at Laugen's.

On Mother and Dad's wedding day, they walked to the \_\_\_\_\_ey Creek Station about a mile from the Lewis Laugen farm. People used to walk up the track and catch a train as there were several trains a day at the time. Most likely when they got to Rushford, they had to walk to the Lutheran parsonage where Rev. Jaasted married them. They had their picture taken by Grossfield. Mother wore a pretty blue wool cashmere dress trimmed with blue silk. They came back on the 3:30 passenger train. We used to call it the coffee train as it was afternoon lunch time.

In the evening, Mother went to put her chore dress on in preparation for milking the cows. But her mother said, "No, Isabell, tonight you are to stay in and someone else do the milking." So she felt like she celebrated. The wedding was on March 8, 1882. Guess she was a very happy bride; she was only nineteen and a half years old. Said later that was too young; should have stayed home longer and helped Mother. Guess that was to be a lesson for us, but Mother did not live to see us get married.

Soap making was part of the household routine. All winter the ashes from the cook stove were saved in a box. Then in the spring, soft water was poured over the ashes till a slow lye dripping came from the ashes. This took many days before a large forty-gallon iron kettle was filled. The kettle was hung on an iron rod over a fire and boiled for a few days. Tallow was put in so when it was the consistency of honey, it was cooled and stored in wooden barrels, generally set back of the cellar door. It was such a strong soap that it had to be used on white clothes only; it would take the coloring out of the dark clothes.

Butchering on the farm back in 1897 and later, generally consisted of a large critter and a hog. The hog casings were cleaned, first by stepping on them in the snow till much of the brown intestine coating came off. Then they were washed. Lots of sausage meat was ground up. Some was stuffed into the clean casings and tied into rings and boiled and hung in a cool place to dry. It was very good and tasty. We also made liver bologna. The blood was saved and made into cakes or put into muslin bags and boiled. When cold, it was cut into slices and fried. The choice beef was put into salt brine for six weeks, then hung up either in the attic or shanty where it took several weeks to dry and made into dried beef. And was it every good. Then the bones were used for vegetable soup, generally cooked in a big iron kettle. We always made dumplings of either eggs or potatoes. The side pork was put in salt brine and eaten in the spring. But during the hot summer, we had to buy the meat.