

Churches of Freeborn County, Minnesota Biographical and Historical Notes

Rev. Frantz Einar Wulfsberg was born in Drammen, Norway, December 21, 1841, son of a printer, Jacob Wulfsberg. Learned the printer's trade and worked as such from 1857 to 1862. Came to Madison, Wis., where he worked as bookprinter until 1865, when he took up the study of theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. In 1867 he was ordained as pastor of the Lutheran churches of Freeborn county, Minnesota, where he continued until 1883.

It was under his leadership that Hayward and Oakland congregations were organized. Hayward January 14 and Oakland February 15, 1876.

Rev. Oluf Hanson Smeby was born in Rock County, Wisconsin, January 31, 1851. His parents were Hans O. Smeby and Helene Fryslie Smeby. At the age of 14 he came to Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and entered the preparatory department continuing through the college, receiving his B. A. Degree in 1871.

The following fall he matriculated at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, successfully completing the theological course of that institution in 1874, at the age of 23 years. He was ordained to the holy ministry that same year upon a call from the Freeborn congregations, to act as assistant to Rev. Einar Wulfsberg.

In 1876 he was called as pastor of the congregations at Albert Lea, Hayward and Oakland, and besides preaching at Moscow and in London township. At those places he was instrumental in organizing congregations in 1890 and 1891. It was harder for people to drive eight or ten miles in those days than it is now. The farmers living north of the Rice lake outlet, or the big ditch, as we know it now, had difficulty in getting to the Oakland church with their oxen. But they were not to be denied the benefits of the church on that account. Rev. Smeby went to them, preached the word of God and administered the Sacraments in their midst. Mrs. Smeby, nee Marie Carlson, of Chicago, whom he had married in 1876 oftentimes went with him, driving the 25 miles each way with horses and buggy, or cutter, in all kinds of roads, or no roads at all, in all kinds of weather. Those were the pioneer days. But they were happy in those days too. They found comfort and satisfaction in what they had. Comfort lies where comfort seeks. They had implicit confidence in the word that abideth forever. And they sacrificed much for the sake of that word. All honor to those of the present generation who continue to do the same in the spirit of their grandfathers and grandmothers, the early pioneers.

It was among such men and women to a large extent that Rev. and Mrs. Smeby labored throughout this large stretch of territory with much faithfulness.

In 1894, however, the work in Albert Lea having become more extensive, especially in view of the added work which Rev. Smeby had taken upon himself in teaching Norwegian, German and religion at Luther Academy, organized in 1888, it was found necessary for him to resign as pastor of these country congregations and devote himself entirely to the work in Albert Lea. Rev. Hans Magelssen who is now at Walker, Minn., acted as his assistant for a time, until T. O. Tolo was called and installed the 19th Sunday after Trinity, September, 1894.

Rev. Smeby had thus served these congregations as pastor for 18 years. And on this, our 50th anniversary we remember his faithful service with thanksgiving. We remember his "patience, gentleness and goodness," and our prayer is that our dear heavenly Father may richly bless him and his esteemed wife with the peace and comfort that is in the Holy Spirit.

Rev. Thore O. Tolo was born in Norheimsund, Vikor, Hardanger, Norway, May 3, 1867. His parents were Ole A. and Anna Skaalheim Tolo.

He came to America in 1882. Attended Willmar Seminary, '84'85, Luther College '85'90 and Luther Seminary '90'93. Became pastor at Great Falls, Mont., '93'94 and came to Hayward Sept. 1894.

Rev. Smeby having served these congregations from Albert Lea, Rev. Tolo became the first resident pastor of this charge. Shortly before coming here he was married to Miss Oliva Thorpe of Willmar. A parsonage was built the summer of 1895.

At the annual meeting of the Oakland congregation December 4, 1895, it was decided to build a new church. Architect Anderson of Des Moines, Iowa, was engaged and his plans accepted February 1, 1896. The contract was let to A. Tolsund for \$2,500 and the old church.

The cornerstone was laid June 22 by Rev. Smeby and the church was dedicated 20th Sunday after Trinity by Prof. John Ylvisaker of Luther Seminary.

In Hayward a committee was elected March 22, 1899 consisting of H. C. Nelson, chairman, Rev. Tolo, secretary, M. P. Hanson, treasurer, Andrew Frydenlund, J. M. Madson, A. Sanderson, M. Teslow, L. Lunde to provide for the building of a new church. The contract was let to Mr. Quandahl of Northwood, Iowa. It was dedicated July 8, 1900.

In the meantime Rev. Tolo had accepted a call from Belgrade, Minn., and moved there in November, 1899.

While in Hayward two boys were born to them. Walter who is now pastor at Noonan, N. Dak., and Arthur, pastor at Denver, Colo.

Rev. Eivind Ditlef Skabo was born in Drammen, Norway, Oct. 8, 1864 of Hans and Christine Marie Fegth Skabo. He spent ten years at the University of Oslo from 1882-1892, his theological course being included. He was called as pastor among the Norwegians that had settled in Utah, making his home in Salt Lake City, from 1891-1899.

He was married to Ragna Hallen of Oslo, Norway in 1891.

He was called to Hayward pastorate and moved to Hayward December 1, 1899.

On the 16th of June, 1901 the Hayward congregation celebrated its 25th anniversary. Revs. Smeby, Sauer and Strom were the visiting pastors. \$47.00 were laid on the altar for foreign missions on that day.

Rev. Skabo gradually lost his health at that time and in 1903 he was given a vacation for a trip to Norway. Rev. C. F. Magelssen substituted for him during his absence.

In the fall of 1903 the new kitchen was built at the parsonage.

In March, 1904 Rev. Skabo was taken ill again. Rev. Ulen became assistant. Feb. 25, 1905 Rev. O. Amdalsrud took charge as temporary pastor. Rev. Skabo and family left March 6th for Asheville, N. C. June 5th a telegram from Mrs. Skabo announced the death of her husband at 4:30 that day.

The body was brought back to Hayward and amidst a throng of friends, estimated at 1,200, an impressive service was conducted by Dr. H. G. Stub of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, assisted by Rev. H. J. Strand and Rev. T. A. Torgerson, president of the Iowa District at that time, besides eight other pastors.

Rev. Amdalsrud writes of him: "He was a loving pastor, a tireless worker, a Christian personality and an Israelite in whom there was no guile."

Mrs. Skabo moved back to Norway, but has made frequent visits to Hayward since. She is an honored guest whenever she comes.

Rev. O. O. Amdalsrud was born in Ryfylke, Norway, July 7, 1859. Graduated from Tromsø Seminary where he became teacher from 1881-1891. Attended Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., 1892-1895. Served as pastor in Minneapolis, Koshkonong, Wis., Hoboken, N. J., Crookston, Minn.,

Seamen's Missionary at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, S. A., again at Crookston, Los Angeles, Calif., and in 1905 he came to Hayward. Here he worked faithfully though not strong, for seven years. He left in September, 1912 for Hoboken, N. J. He is now pastor near there, at Weehawken, N. J. He is married.

During the next six months Rev. Carl Doving served during October and November, 1912 and Rev. K. L. Kuttebo from Jan. 1 to May 25, 1913.

Rev. Johan Ellertson was born in Bergen, Norway, Aug. 15, 1874. He attended school in Bergen and Stavanger and came to Baldwin, Wis., in 1902 as parochial school teacher. From 1906-1908 he attended Luther Seminary, St. Paul and became pastor at Brooklyn, N. Y., from 1908-1913. On the 26th of May, 1913, he preached his first sermon in Hayward and Oakland. He continued in charge up to March 31, 1924, when he left for his new call in Worcester, Mass. He was married in 1910 to Miss Magna Schade of Brooklyn.

Rev. Charles Arnold Fritz was born in Vernon township, near Hayfield, Minn., December 22, 1884. He graduated from Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, in 1911 and Luther Seminary, St. Paul in 1914. Became pastor at Ray, N. Dak., with four other congregations from 1914 to 1917, and from 1917 to 1918 at Anaconda, Mont., serving also a part of the time, the congregation at Butte. Due to ill health he resigned and lived on the farm and in Kalispell, Mont. In 1920 he moved to Albert Lea to teach at Luther Academy, religion, Latin and music. In 1924, April 1st he took charge of the Hayward call as substitute for Rev. Ellertson, and August 17 was installed as regular pastor by Rev. Eastvold. In 1915 he was married to Miss Pauline Peterson of Renville, Minn.

THE HAYWARD CONGREGATION, which though not belonging to any synod, has always been served by ministers of the Norwegian Lutheran Evangelical Synod, had its beginning at a very early day, with meetings held in schoolhouses and at homes. The first regular pastor was the Rev. Einer Wulfsberg, although missionaries had preached here earlier than that. Among the pioneers of the church may be mentioned: Ingebrit Knatvold, Endre Gulbrandson, Nels Peterson Olstad, Peter Lunde, Mathias Christopherson, Ole Anderson, Hans F. Olson, Hans Bjornrud, Lars Lunde, John Dahlen, Ole Osthage, M. P. Hansen, C. J. Olson, A. Sanderson, Soren Sorenson Lah, Nels Larson, Lars Hanson, A. P. Hanson, Oliver Nelson and others. The first church building was erected in the summer of 1886 and was remodeled in 1899. The remodeled church was dedicated in June, 1900. Rev. O. H. Smeby was pastor from 1876 until 1894. From 1891 to 1894 he was assisted by Rev. Hans Magelssen. Rev. T. O. Tolo was pastor from 1894 to 1899. Rev. E. Skabo was pastor from 1899 to 1905 and at his death in the latter year was interred in Hayward cemetery, where the congregations in his charge have erected a beautiful monument over his remains. Rev. Skabo spent one year in Europe, 1902-03, and Rev. C. F. Magelssen was here during his absence. In the winter of 1905, when Rev. Skabo's health failed, Rev. O. Amdalsrud came to temporarily fill his place, and later, when Rev. Skabo died, Rev. Amdalsrud was called and was for some time the pastor. He was an active worker, a man of excellent scholarship and sound theology, and has greatly endeared himself to the people among whom he serves. In connection with the church there are a flourishing Ladies' Aid Society and a Young People's Society. The Hayward parsonage is situated a little south of the church. It was built in 1895 and is a fine, large house, with a good orchard and plenty of garden room. Thomas Armstrong donated the lot for a church. In 1876 a cemetery lot was secured about a quarter of a mile from the church.

SYNOD CONGREGATIONS

Trondhjem, Moscow, Oakland and Hayward Congregations

The Rev. Charles Fritz, of Hayward, is in charge of four congregations of the Norwegian Lutheran Evangelical Church.

The Hayward Congregation was organized Friday, January 14, 1876, by Rev. Einar

Wulfsberg. Among the charter members of this church may be mentioned: Endre Gulbrandson, Peter Lunde, Ole Anderson, Engebret H. Knatvold, Lars Lunde and V. Gulbrandson. Endre Gulbrandson, one of the pioneers of this church, was instrumental in securing the site for the cemetery so beautifully located at Hayward, the land being donated by the late Augustus Armstrong. A committee, through subscriptions from the congregation, have authority to keep the cemetery in good condition.

The Oakland Congregation

[ED: sometimes called Midway Lutheran, because it was midway between Albert Lea and the village of Oakland]

It was organized February 15, 1876, by Rev. E. Wulfsberg. The charter officers were John Bell, Sr., Jens Natvig and Andrew Lerum, trustees; Gunder O. Gunderson, secretary. Among those who may be mentioned as prominent in the church in the early days are: Rognald Knutson, Ole J. Winjum, Lars Esse, Peder Tufte, Ole Ofstun, Roland Tisdal, James W. Johnson, H. K. Fodness and Ole O. Wangen. The church edifice, located at the northwest corner of the township of Oakland, was erected in 1896, and dedicated August 20 of the same year by the Rev. Dr. Ylvisaker.

The Moscow Congregation was organized March 17, 1887. Prominent in the work in that section were B. J. Stoa, Elling Soli, O. P. Lunde and G. Gullickson. Moscow church was built in 1910, and dedicated June 28, in that same year, by the Rt. Rev. O. P. Vangsness .

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