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Biography of Anders Pedersen Solem

Anders Pedersen Solem was born on October 18, 1862 in Soknedal, Norway. He was orphaned as a young child and raised by his grandparents. He completed the required public education of the day, which was the age of confirmation in the Lutheran Church (generally fourteen or fifteen years old). When Anders was 16 years old, he was encouraged to immigrate to America with an older neighbor who was leaving with a group from the same area. Former neighbors had already immigrated to the Eau Claire and Menomonie area. With only four percent of Norway's land being arable, the rural culture had a dismal future to offer its youth. Moreover, Anders was the youngest of his siblings and his oldest brother inherited the farm in Norway. The family legend also notes that the grandparents were concerned because of the interest that Anders had expressed in their young servant girl. It was improper for a farm-owners son to marry from the class beneath him. However, it should be noted that the girl, Marit Larsen Oien (1862-1926), immigrated to Eau Claire three years later and she and Anders were married on September 29, 1883 in the parsonage of the First Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Andrew sailed from Trondheim, Norway on May 6, 1879 to Hull, England on the ship "Tasso", took a train to Liverpool, leaving for the United States on May 17 on the ship "Ohio". He landed in Philadelphia on May 28, 1879 and was in Eau Claire by May 31. Anders worked at sawmills and lumber camps his first ten years in this country. He was then employed by Phoenix Manufacturing. After the manufacturing of traction vehicles for the lumbering industry came to a standstill, he worked as a chauffeur and gardener before obtaining employment at A. A. Cutter Co., which made shoes and boots. Anders and his wife were very anxious to learn English and, shortly after arriving in America, Anders began signing his name by the American version, Andrew, and Marit by the American version, Mary. He and Marit had nine children, born between 1884 and 1902. After Marit died in 1926, Andrew moved in with his eldest daughter, where he lived until his death on April 26, 1945.

Translations of Anders Solem Letters

Eau Claire

June 15, 1879

Sept 21, 1879 (2)

Dec 7, 1879

Apr 26, 1880

July 25, 1880

Sept 12, 1880

Jan 9, 1881 (Chippewa River)

Sept 8, 1881

Oct 11, 1881

June 13, 1882 (written for Thom Olson Hugdal)

July 8, 1882

Aug 21, 1883

Apr 13, 1883

Apr 26, 1883

Dec 25, 1883

Meridean, 15 June 1879

Dear Grandfather,

I will now take pen in hand in order to write you a few words in order to let you know how we have had it on the trip from Liverpool to Philadelphia. We had to stay in Liverpool from the 13th to the 17th of May. The reason being that up until then there had been hammocks on the ship and there they built bunk beds to make more sleeping room.

We were at a hotel and had very good accomodations and had plenty of time to see the city. It is first-rate. We went many times to the railway station where trains come and go continuously so I don't know how many arrived and departed each day. The reason we went so often to the station was that the trunk that Knut* and I had together was not to found with the others and we investigated carefully but it could not be found. They telegraphed to Hull and there they found a chest but it was not ours either. Finally there came a telegram back that it was found in Glasgow. It had become mixed up with the Anchor Line's passenger luggage when the boat went that way. This was Thursday evening that the telegram arrived and Friday morning the chest arrived and then we were happy because we had thought it would not come into our hands again. I could write much about Liverpool, but I will limit it as much as possible. There is a large marketplace, but it is not as in Trondhjem under open sky but there are large buildings and there are racks and on the racks are found all sorts of wares, and thus it was throughout the entire building with shelves and aisles. We left Liverpool, as mentioned, on the 17th of May in the afternoon on the steamship Ohio and called at Queenstown on the 18th at 12:00 noon. We departed there a couple hours later and in the evening of the same day we came out into the great wild Atlantic Ocean so we didn't see land any longer; but we did have good weather and I have been well and active the whole time, for which I have the good God to thank. We were a company of some 633 people and the majority were not seaksick and no one died on the trip. We arrived in Philadelphia the 28th of May in the afternoon and we departed there the same evening by train. Between Philadelphia and Pittsburg Gjertru Sneenslappen gave birth to a son and it went both fast and easy and in a couple hours we changed trains and then she walked well alone between the coaches. Saturday the 31st of May at 11:00 a.m. we arrived in Eau Claire where we were shown the way to Elef Hanshus where we ate dinner and Elef came along and negotiated transport for us so that we came in plenty of time to Nils Sneen where we were well received and then were

...

Remainder of letter is missing
but is obviously in the hand of Anders P. Solem

* Knut (Knud) S. Aspeggen was a 52-year old neighbor into whose care Anders was entrusted for his trip to "America".

Meridean, 21st September 79

Dear Grandfather!

Your very welcome letter of the 19th of last month I received the 17th of this month whereby I see it is the same as usual over in Norway. I see that you are well and the same am I, for which good men cannot thank the dear God enough; but I see also that Grandmother is sick and that the illness is almost the same as that which Ole Berg has, yes, even worse, so it obviously isn't good with her, but she will of course have to be patient until our Lord does what he chooses to do, whether she shall pass away or get well again and live a while longer. I don't have anything new to tell you as everything is the same as before for me. I feel more comfortable here day by day and time has gone so fast this summer that I can hardly believe there are only 8 days until Michaelmas;* Here it is also beginning to show signs of fall outside as the woods have begun to fade a little and the weather is colder so that now in the morning there is a little frost on the ground; but we had, and continue to have, good weather and seldom has it rained, as it certainly is not over 4 or 5 times since I came here to this country. I see also that you remind me to read God's Word and this is not so easy as there is noise and commotion continually; but I do not regret at all that I came here so you shall have many thanks for having given me money and paid for the trip here. Your letter of the 20th of July I received the 16th of August and answered it on the 17th or 18th, the same month, wherein I told a little about the fall's outcome; but I will nevertheless tell a little now in case that letter does not arrive. It was an average year both with grain, hay, fruit and potatoes, and the harvesting took place during favorable weather. I see by your letter that there in Soknedal you are having a good year if there is favorable weather for harvest which makes me very happy as then there will perhaps be better times, at least so there will not be famine. I see that you remind me about inquiring into something to work at when winter comes, but that I have not investigated yet, but I don't think it is so difficult to get something to work at, at least to get food morning and evening and go to school during the day, and this work is to take care of horses and cattle for farmers, and this I don't think would be so bad. A person cannot exactly earn money with this; but it can be just as good and better than money to be able to speak a little English. How long the mill will continue, I do not know for sure yet, undoubtedly 1-1½ months more.

I told you also in my last letter about my wages. I have \$15.00 @ month, the wage is not very high, but a person must be satisfied with what he can get when he cannot speak for himself, but must have others speak for him.

Nothing further this time, with an affectionate greeting to you all in the house from me.

Anders P. Solem

To Anders Olsen Solem

* Michaelmas- the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, Sept. 29.

** Anders was living in the dormitory building provided by the Eau Claire Lumber Company for its sawmill employees.

*** plus board and room.

To Siri and Marit Solem*

Meridean 21 September 79

Good Friends!

I have planned for a long time to write to you, but it hasn't been done because I have written a letter almost every Sunday though not all home, but the greatest part to your neighbor, so I think you have heard how it is with me here; this must do as my excuse. I am well as usual, getting along fine and in all respects everything is good with me, and for that I have our dear God to thank. Now I want to ask how is it with you? I see by Grandfather's letters that you, Siri, are very sad over my leaving, but you must not grieve over that because for me there should be no concern. I do not regret at all that I came here and the work has not been hard up until now either, something that I imagined while I was still in Norway. Of course, it can be difficult when a person must always be prepared to begin work when the mill (whistle) blows for then one does not have to wait long before it is in full swing. But then one also is prepared to quit when it blows, so it is good with one here at the mill that he gets to know when he shall begin and quit with his work. The working hours here are 12 hours daily and continue from 6:00 in the morning until 7:00 in the evening with a 1 hour's rest for dinner, so supposedly it is 6 hours between meals during the day; but a person gets to eat unchallenged what he needs in the morning before he begins with his work and this is so for every single meal, and he can also stick a bite of food in his pocket if he thinks it is a long time between meals, so a person does not need to go hungry in America, because although it is long between meals, the food is good besides, so a person can well get along with 3 meals a day. I see by the first letter I received from Grandfather that I should greet Nils Sneen and his wife and family and Knud. 14 days ago I met Anders Sneen, son of Nils. He was here in Meridean on an errand. I brought him ~~the~~ greetings, and I heard at the same time that everything was well with all of you. Knud asked me when we parted that I should greet you and Aspeggen** when I wrote, which I promised (to do). I will quit this time with affectionate greetings to you and everyone in the house.

A.P.Solem

You will obviously have to study much before you can read this letter as I am writing fast so it is not very legible, but I think with time you will read it.

(In the margin) You must write some words to me and put in the letter when Grandfather writes and at the same time tell me how it is with you.

* Siri and Marit were the servant girls at Nord-Solem. Siri came from the Aspeggen farm, and Marit from Oyegrinda, but because they were living at Solem they are referred to by that name. *Marit emigrated to Eau Claire in 1882 and married Anders in 1883.*

** Referring to Knud's family at Aspeggen.

Eau Claire 7 December 1879

Dear Grandfather!

I have been planning for a long time to write to you, but it has not come about on account of my uncertainty over what I am going to do this winter, whether I should go to school or to the woods. Finally, I have decided to go to the woods, as I hear from Tarald Olsen Estenstad that it isn't any worse to work in the woods than at the mills. The mill at Meridean shut down the first of last month, and when I settled my account there, then it was necessary to go to the town of Eau Claire to receive my money, as the mill in Meridean belongs to a company here in town* and therefore I was supposed to go to the company office in order to get my money. When I had gotten the money I went to Peder Sneenslappen and acquired lodging as he rents a house here in town, and here I also heard that someone is digging a canal, so I thought I could get work at that, as the superintendents here are not impossible, but that I missed out on as there were too many people. Peder had worked at a mill here in town and it also quit at the same time as the one I worked at. But that mill started in again after a few days, and then they asked for more workers, so I got work here although it lasted only a week and a half. Since then I have had woodchopping until the last days. The reason I have not gone to the woods is that the weather has been so good and partly because it has rained, and we've had just a little snow and therefore the woods owners do not want any people. But I have ^{feels} promised, or hired myself out, to work in the woods, ~~for Christmas~~, and I think I'll have to go in about a week. I have up until now been well and getting along fine for which I have the good God to thank. A tragic event occurred here in town the first of this month when there was an explosion in a planing mill and three men died immediately and five were wounded; these were Irish people and for that reason they were supposed to get work ahead of other people at the only mill which was scheduled to continue into the winter as the superintendent was also Irish.

Your welcome letter of the 2nd of last month I received today, just as I had begun with my writing to you, wherefore I offer my heartfelt thanks. And whereby I see that you are well as usual, but that Grandmother is keeping to her bed. I see that there has been an auction at home on the 4th of October and that you have set aside for me a ticking, with many other items, that shall be my property. Wherefore I give you my most heartfelt thanks for all the good that you and Grandmother have shown me. You ask me to greet K. Aspeggen; and that I will do; but Ole Heggen I can not meet as I hear that he is staying in Minneapolis, that is, Minnesota, and therefore is far from here. Note: When I go to the woods there is no point in writing until late into spring as I will not be coming from the woods before April and therefore will not get letters sent to me. I must quit with my writing for this time with an affectionate greeting to you and Grandmother from your devoted grandson A Solem So I wish you a happy Christmas and New Year.

(There is an additional sentence in the margin of three of the four pages, as follows:)

I am supposed to greet you from Peder Sneen and family and Tarald Olsen Estenstad.

I must also greet you from K. Aspeggen. And he wishes that you would write him a letter.

This time I want to send you my portrait as a remembrance of me.**

*The Meridean Mill spent most of its life under the ownership of the Eau Claire Lumber Co. It was located on Meridean Island, in the Chippewa River, about nine miles south of Eau Claire. It provided boarding houses on the premises for its workers, as did most of the mills.

** A copy of the portrait is included in this volume. It is a likeness of Anders at about the time of his 17th birthday - October 20, 1879.

Eau Claire, 26th April 1880

Mr! A. Solem.

Your letter I have received, for which I hereby give you my kind thanks. It pleases me much to receive a letter from whomsoever in Soknedal, but much moreso from a sender completely unexpected. Yes, my dear old Anders, that you wanted to write to me again was much appreciated. I shall of course accept your writing with good intentions; you must not think otherwise. My well-meaning thoughts will then make my words understandable to you. I will therefore get to the subject itself as your letter in one way demands an answer from me. It can of course be said in all brevity and simplicity that that which regards our little Anders who is here, in as far as I have learned to know him, is as reliable and good as he can be; and if he will continue in this manner-as he has been, and is now-then there is no risk for him. And if God will grant him health and vitality then he can make it much better here than he could ever have done in Soknedal. There is ~~none~~ who knows the future, but as said, if he remains healthy, then it is self evident that he will make it better in America than in Soknedal. It can be said straight out that in the future there will be much reward for him, and he will be a joy to his very concerned family and acquaintances at home. But I want to tell you one thing, that you can be happy to hear that the boy is in truth as respectable as a person can possibly be. That is all I can say to you, and I talk with him every day as he works at the same mill as I.

What goes on in America in general I know very little about as I don't travel much among the people. At any time in the newspaper one can always see some departing. All that I would say is that America is to a high degree better than Norway; I mean particularly for the common person. Here a man can work himself forward at any time, and has his daily opportunity-as a person says, but that one cannot do in Soknedal or other places over there. I for one, have never regretted that I came to this country, for I know with certainty that I would not have done as well if I had yet been in Soknedal. Excuse the haste. With heartfelt greetings from my wife and two children. We live as customary, so there is nothing we lack, but with respect for whatever happens, as far as that goes. Anders is healthy and doing well in all respects. Write again.

Mr!

A Solem

Most friendly greetings,

Elef Eriksen Hanshus*

* Elef E. Hanshus was born to a neighbor friend of Anders Olsen Ertshus after he married the widow Marit Arntsdatter Solem, so he (Elef) was in his middle years. (He seems to have been a leader of the Soknedalens in Eau Claire (see letter of 15 June '79)). It is of interest to note that our Anders P. Solem was known as "Little Anders" whereas his step-grandfather was "Old Anders."

Eau Claire July 25th 80

Good Friend! (Anders Olsen Solem)

I will now take pen in hand in order to write some words, and let you know how I live and feel; I am now well again, but I was sick eight days ago and this illness consisted mostly of a headache so I went to the doctor and immediately became well again. I was not seriously sick either, so I didn't even stay in bed, but it is surprising that I, whom you know from before have been against doctors, visited him now anyway. But I have until now been very well the whole time I have been here in this country.

I have as of now no news of consequence to report which would interest you as everything here is about the same as usual. Concerning the crops I can indeed report that as far as I know the present year's harvest for Wisconsin, Illinois Minnesota and Dakota will have an average yield, both for grain, hay, fruit, potatoes, etc. But it is as the old folks have said, that there is none who knows what kind of a harvest one has before he has brought it into the barn.

We have had warm weather these days with occasional little rain during the nights. I also received a letter from you this winter for which I want to give you my best thanks. I should have written to you before, but it has been my carelessness and lethargy, and partly also I have not had time for it, this will have to serve as my excuse. I have this winter, and up until now, worked at a place called Witten (Withie ?) Here there is a mill which is in association with Porter Mills, and my position was mainly to repair that which broke down; but I think I will go to Porter again.

I often think of Norway, and I think I will be coming back in a few years if I remain healthy and live that long. I must now quit with this poor writing for this time with a heartfelt greeting to you and all in the house from me.

Knud S. Aspeggen*

You must greet my sister Siri from me. At the same time I must ask you to greet them at home in Aspeggen also - that everything is fine with me.

Dear Grandfather!

As the writer of these lines I want to also add some words for myself. I have nothing new to tell you other than that I am healthy and living well in all possible respects. Also in the spiritual area as we here in Eau Claire have a converted minister (?) and I have the opportunity to hear God's Word 2 or 3 times every Sunday. I can also tell you that my brother Karl has come to this country, but he is not here in town; he went further, namely to Minnesota. I received a letter from him the first of this week and everything was well with him. Many greetings from your grandson

A P Solem

* Knud was the middle-aged neighbor to whom Anders P. was entrusted on trip to America. His sister was a servant at S.

Eau Claire September 12th 1880

Dear Grandfather!

Your letter of the 14th of last month I received the 10th of this month, wherein I see that you are well and live as usual, but that Grandmother is in bed and that it is doubtful, I suppose, that she will get up again, when she has had it so long; it all depends upon our Lord what he deigns to do and what is best for her. I have also been well up to now and am living comfortably, for which I have the dear Lord to thank. And I am working at the same saw-mill as before, and I think it will continue until the middle of November if the weather is favorable. I have no news of any consequence that would interest you. Everything here is as usual. As regards the present harvest I can report that around here they are estimating an average year's yield as the newspapers report that in some places it is over and in other places under an average year, but the fruit trees (wild fruit) are giving an extraordinary rich yield. So in spite of the strong rain that fell in the month of June the harvest was larger than expected. In fact, the rain on some farms that lie along the river did great damage in that the water covered their whole property so there was little or no crops. And among these farmers I can name Even J. Fossum, Ole A. Bordal*...

The remainder of the letter is missing, except for the following notation along the margin of the second page. Usually there were four pages to Anders P. Solem's letters.

K. Aspeggen I will greet for you the first I see him. He also wrote you a letter a month ago, but it....

* The wife of Even J. Fossum was Gunnild A. Bordal, sister of Ole A. Bordal - all immigrants from Soknedal. Two of the Fossum's grandchildren, Martin and Peter Fossum, were associated with St. Olaf College when this writer was a student there in the early 1940's. Peter was a professor of Chemistry and Martin was the manager of the Book Store.

Actually there was a very bad flood in June, with a great deal of damage. According to the local records the Norwegian Church [First Lutheran] and the Courthouse [then located in what is now Wilson Park] plus many homes were full of refugees. The two bridges collapsed, buildings were damaged and some destroyed.

** (the translator, Genevieve Hagen)

Chippewa River, January 9th, 81

Dear Grandfather!

In the last letter I wrote to you awhile ago I said I would write again when I first went back to the woods, which has not occurred until now. The reason I have not written before is this: that I have been to the woods and back this fall. It was specifically the 25th of November that I went up the first time, but I didn't like it very well there, so left again the 4th of Dec. and went to Eau Claire the same day. The work I was supposed to do there was to help the cook just as last winter, and the reason I didn't like it there was that the cook didn't want to do anything more than was necessary. This cook was an Irish woman, and, as I didn't like it I made use of the law and went on my way, for that is the way to do it here in this country; because it is not here as in old Norway that there shall be many weeks notice, but one can give notice and leave the same day. I came, as said, to Eau Claire the 4th of Dec. last year, and was there until after Christmas, and accomplished almost nothing in this period. The next little job I had was to chop a little wood. On the 31st Dec. I went up in the woods again and for the same company as last year, and have the same work also; but not today with the same cook, but I am now with a Norwegian girl and she is definitely a good one too. So I have it good this winter-am well and active all the time which is the greatest good a person can have in this world.

The mill I worked at this summer closed down the 11th November. It would perhaps have gone longer, but then it became so cold that they had to stop. Since then we had good weather up until Christmas, but during Christmas it was quite cold which is still continuing. We have also now enough snow so that people get unusually good fine saw-logs, especially in the woods. I have nothing new to tell you. Everything is the same here as usual. I will have to quit for this time with an affectionate greeting to you and everyone in the house from your devoted grandson,

Andrew P. Solem

I think you can address the letters the same as before, namely to Eau Claire because it isn't worth it to change the address just for a few weeks. Besides, I will have someone down there in town to send them up to me.

So I wish you all good luck in the New Year we have just entered. It is, I suppose, quite difficult to read this letter, but I cannot help it for I have such little time so I must write fast.

Note that Andrew has now become "Andrew," also that he used his initials in a transition stage, likely out of deference to his family.

Eau Claire, September 8th, 81
My dear old friend! *(meaning Anders Olson Solem - Andrew's grand father)*

After our last conversation together, I promised to write you and let you know how I live and feel. It has been a long time in fulfilling that promise, and that is mostly because I cannot write myself and am shy about asking others. So you must excuse me. As far as my health is concerned, I am well as usual. My eyes have also been good since I came here. AS far as my situation is concerned, I must say it is also good. I am living now with my son Nils and we rent a house from Peter Sneen as he bought a house this spring which you possibly had heard before.

Nils is also well and works at a sawmill here in town; has also now since the first of last month a considerably larger salary.

As you perhaps know, the working hours at the mills were 12 hours per day. People are of the opinion that this is too long a working-day. Of course in this were the people for the most part agreed, and they also who didn't want to force the issue. Monday morning the 18th of July, the workers in town and around the area refused to work if they didn't get a 10-hour work-day, and this they were denied. They then started riots and in less than an hour five large sawmills were stopped and the number of rioters grew quickly. There were to begin with only 300-400 men, but it soon grew to almost 1000. About noon they gathered at a spot in the city called the West Side Park, where a committee of two men from each mill was chosen to negotiate with the sawmill owners the next day concerning 10-hour days. The next day the rioter's numbers grew to about 15-1600. It was all rather quiet and peaceful. This continued for two weeks and the result was that a 10-hour day they could not get, rather their mills would go along in supporting the injured, but a little increase in wages they would get, and with that it ended. On the first of August all the mills were in full swing again. Anders Solem was not around here at that time.

He was in the woods then, but he is now down here on a quick trip and will go up again in the morning; so I can greet you from him, that he is well and doing well, and has up to now conducted himself respectably and properly, and remains as he was. There is no danger that he will other than manage well through time if misfortune does not become too great. He says he will write to you the first chance that he gets. Of news I do not have much to report; some are born and some die; and amongst the latter I can relate, as you probably have previously heard, that my brother's son Knut departed this sinful world through an abrupt and sudden death** a couple months ago.

Please greet them at home from me, as well as all at Solem.

B.N.Estenstad*

*Berit Nilsdotter Estenstad was a neighbor of the Solems.

**The nephew was Knut Pedersen Estenstad -- likely died in a sawmill accident, which was a frequent occurrence.

Eau Claire, October 11th 1881

Dear Grandfather!

Your very welcome letter dated the very last of August, I actually received 2 weeks ago, for which you are thanked!

I see by it that you are healthy as usual and the same for me also. I have for the most part been in the woods lately and will also be staying there this winter and possibly until next summer, as I have just now recently talked with two Norwegian fellows who are in partnership with each other, that I would be with them one year. I have now been with them for a month and like it and am thriving there.

The reason I am now in town, is that Knud Aspeggen has now definitely decided to go back to the old home Soknedalen. When I received the letter that he was going to leave, I wanted to make a trip down and meet him before he left, even though I have nothing of importance I wanted of him. I felt nevertheless, that I wanted to see and take leave of him as perhaps it could be the last time I have opportunity to see him here in this world.

It may not be impossible that I also could come to Norway some time on a short trip, -if I should live that long, but when it could be is not good to determine yet. I must tell you a little more concerning my job and situation. I went, as you already know, to the woods the first part of July, but I wasn't there over a month because it developed that he didn't have work for us any longer as he had this time been fooled on the woods in that there wasn't much woods there where he was going to cut, as the company had said there was. So he didn't think that it paid him to bother with this business; and, so when we were finished with the haying we went down, (to Eau Claire area presumeably) Then I immediately got work with a farmer I knew well and worked there for one month. Then I met these two fellows I now work for, which I knew well, especially one of them.

These boys aren't actually in woods management, but they maintain a stopping place, which is such a place where the woods people and others stay over night and for dinner, and my responsibility is to keep everything in the stables in order, which sometimes can be hard and other times not so hard, according as the activity (movement) is large or small.

As regards this year's crop, I can report that it was an average year to begin with, but on account of the constantly continuing rain which began the first of last month much grain and hay has been ruined. The latter is ruined because of the rivers which nearly always go over their banks. And you see, that as soon as the water goes over its normal boundaries in this country so low and flat, that it goes over large areas and causes great damage.

This will have to be enough as you can hear more from Knud about the situation here. You with everyone in the house are greeted with the best from your devoted grandson

Andrew P. Solem

Eau Claire 13th June in '82

Dear Sister!

I must once more take my simple pen and send you a few lines. I am living so well and hearty, and nothing do I lack and the same I wish to hear from you and ~~Mother~~

~~her~~. It is awhile ago since I wrote you but have received nothing for a long time but nevertheless I hope that you are in the best of health. As far as ~~news~~ ^{news} is concerned there is nothing other than that Olaug A. Lillebordal is married to a man from Rennebo* and my cousin Gurra Andersdatter is also going to get married to Anders Nilson Sneen. Thorval T. Hoff is here in Eau Claire and working, and his brother Ole is also here. I wrote a letter to you about whether you wanted to come here to America in case I should send you tickets; and I have waited long for an answer but have received nothing. If you want to come then you must advise me about it so that I can send you tickets.

If you want to come then I will ask that you be a good and well-behaved girl, making diligent use of the Book and preparing yourself well for Confirmation if you are studying for that. Write me and inform me about your accomplishments and also your exact age and how you live and in what circumstances. Dear Sister, write to me and tell me if you wish to come and then I will write to you. Live well and greet Mother - that I am healthy and well. Carry on dear Sister and don't forget to write to me soon. Your brother

Thom Olson Hugdal
Eau Claire P.O.
Eau Claire Co.
Wiss
North Amerika

When you write then you must tell me when you wish to come.

* Rennebo-~~should be~~ ^{you} spelled Rennebu- is neighboring township of Soknedal to the southwest.

*Andrew Solen wide letters for some of our immigrants
here in Eau Claire who are not so proficient in writing*

Address letters as usual

A.Solem

Wis. Eau Claire

North America

Eau Claire, July 8th, 1882

Dear Grandfather!

First of all I want to say many thanks to you for all the welcome letters which you have sent me in the past half year; there were three in all and I haven't written answers to any of them until now today I must seriously take hold of my pen in order to send you a few words, though poor they will be, and let you know a little about my state of health and conditions at the present time.

Yes, God be praised, I have until now been well and active which is the best good a person can have here on this earth. The reason I have been so lethargic about writing I can partly answer and in one way not. I was down from the woods one time in the middle of April, when I at that time quit working at the stopping place because I had little pay and they were not much to depend upon either. I was at that time in town for 3-4 days, and then I thought about writing to you; but I was hindered as I was on the point of changing my address. But then I got a job quicker than I had expected. I got then, as said, after a 3-4 days lapse, work on a floating log raft for the Norwegian man about whom I have written before that I have worked for in the woods.

Now I came down to celebrate the 4th, as it is called; it is the American's Independence Day, about the same way as the 17th of May is Norway's Independence Day.* The 4th was celebrated yesterday with great festivity. I still haven't worked since I came down; but I think I will get work at the sawmill now for awhile on into the fall. Right now it is not difficult to get other work either, for example, such as cooking, but I do not like to cook at this time of year as it is too warm. We are now having good weather and the outlook for this year's harvest gives promise to be average, and this week the majority of the farmers are in full swing with their haying. And the grass also shows signs of being middling. I have nothing new of importance to report for this time; everything here is about the same as usual.

From my brother Karl I have not heard anything since the first part of May. Then he was in Minneapolis in Minnesota. Presumably he is still in the state of Minnesota and working for the railroad. Many newcomers have arrived this year and amongst them I can name Nils Estenstadsoien and report that all goes well with him. Likewise I can greet you and Anfin Solem** from Ole Skjaerlioren. Endre Skjaerliloken*** was married to Marie Sveum some weeks ago. Anders Sneensflaatten is also married. You and grandmother together with all the others in the house are greeted.

A.P.Solem

*More accurately known as Constitution Day.

** Neighbor at Utstu (Outer) Solem.

*** The -oren and -loken endings on Skjaerli indicate cottar places. Here in E.C. those endings were dropped and the name anglicized to Shirley. Likewise the endings were dropped for Estenstad, Sneen, Oyen/Oien and other cottars. In America there were not to be such name distinctions.

Eau Claire, August 21 1882

Dear Grandfather!

Being that I have plenty of time to write today, I will not neglect to report a few words and let you know a little about my state of health and situation. Yes, God be praised, I have up to the present time been healthy and active which is the best good a person can have here on earth.

Your very welcome letter written the 28th of June, together with the one of July 3rd, I have of course received some time ago, for which you are thanked. I see thereby that you are well and live as usual, which is a joy for me to hear, but I understand also that Grandmother is still keeping to her bed, which is sad to hear, but it is doubtful I suppose, that she will ever get up again as she is getting older, so that her time is soon at hand. But possibly she can yet live a few more years according to God's will, as he directs all things for the best and according to what is useful for us. I will now tell a little about my work; I work as before mentioned, at the sawmill, which is not especially pleasant, but for my part I like it well in that job.

I also tried some other work a month ago, and that was, namely, I was a clerk in a general store which job for my part I liked less well, which was because I had less pay than at other jobs, and also for another reason; it is obviously such, that one who is raised in the working class, is better off continuing with the same; so after two weeks notice I left that place and went to the mill, of course much against the manager's wishes, but I explained my feelings straight out - that I could not be content in this business, although this business is not to be minimized, especially if a person could manage it on a large scale or with large supplies, but you see, everyone has to follow his own desires and longings. To be sure, I've also been on the point of starting a business, which cannot be of the best kind; namely, to become an innkeeper. You see, this is uncomplicated and not of the best business; yes, so to say, difficult and dangerous, as one must take care not to become a drunkard. I don't know if anything will come of it either as I am, according to American law, too young to start a public business. In order to do that, one must be 21 years of age. But anyway one can have speculations so that he can know what he can do when the time comes that I am of age. Enough of that. Nothing new of importance do I have to report to you. I did not meet Anders Sneen when he traveled through, but I did receive the letter sent through the mail, so I have not heard anything from him. Undoubtedly everything is alright with him.

Remainder of letter is missing.

Eau Claire Wis. April 13.1883

Dear Grandfather!

Your esteemed and very welcome letter written the 15th of last month I received today and for which I give you my heartfelt thanks. I see thereby that you are well and living as usual, and the same I can report for us for which I have the dear God to thank, and especially when a person is so far from his distant home as I am. I see further that you point out that you have written 2 letters to me since Grandmother died, which I have received long ago, and respectfully answered the same days on which I received them, but they perhaps have not arrived. The last time I wrote, I sent it from here on Tuesday, the 10th of this month, , therefore only 3 or 4 days ago, so you see I am not neglecting to carry out the same, though simple and poor it does become.

First and most importantly, I want to tell you a little about America's economic situation in recent times, which according to my opinion is expanding in greater and greater measure in regard to railroad construction, building of factories, mills, and home and business buildings. Yes, it is true to say that in the last year there were built many fine houses here in the city of Eau Claire, but this is just a trifle in comparison to the other states and cities in the country. Likewise it is with railroad construction. A person can now easily travel to the woods, namely, ride on the trains many hundred miles which we couldn't have done 3 years ago, and another thing about it - a person can travel as cheaply, yes, even cheaper than he could before. If a person had come to me 3½ years ago and said, specifically the summer that I worked at Meridean sawmill - that in 3 years I would see how the train would come this far, I would not have believed it. But now actually it is over a half year since the train has passed there. And here a person sees examples of how power and money can achieve great things. Likewise with the factories and such, there are many which were constructed this past winter just here in the city. Last winter there was a great deal of snow, yes, so to say, a little too much, and still there is a good deal remaining in many places, and that is perhaps bad for the farmers, for now is about the right time for them to begin with the spring work, yes, preferably a little earlier they usually begin with that here in this country. But you see, a man might just as well wait until Our Lord's time comes. He knows best when the right time comes I suppose, because it says: "He (Our Lord) knows and directs all things for the best."

I don't know any news of importance to tell you. Everything hereabouts is the same as usual. Nothing further for this time than an affectionate greeting to you from your devoted grandson A.P.Solem

You may greet Siri with the most friendly greetings from me. A.P.Solem

This was written quickly so you'll have to read what you can and guess at the rest. Most respectfully A Solem

** Grandmother, Susan Antedatter ^{had} died Dec. 24, 1882.
The letter ^{to be} addressed the same as usual A. Solem
Eau Claire
North America*

Eau Claire April 26th 1883

Dear Grandfather!

Your esteemed and very welcome letter of the 3rd of this month I have received. I am going to a big dinner given for Nils P. Estenstadsoien's wife Berit as she with several Soknedalingers have arrived here in Eau Claire. Yes, it is true to say that it was a large group. Many got off the train here, but the largest number continued westward to a well-known place by the name of Menomonie about 3 Norwegian miles west of Eau Claire. Ole R. Braek went there, although I met him for a few minutes at the railroad station here yesterday. It wasn't for a very long time as you must understand the train doesn't stop for many minutes at any station. Enough of this. I am going back to my own story and say first and foremost - thank you for that welcome letter. I see that you are well and live as usual which is a joy for me to hear, and the same I can report that I am, and for that I have only the good God to thank. As mentioned before, the emigrants arrived here yesterday at 10:00 in the morning in a very long train - it consisted of 10 passenger cars entirely occupied; and most of them, or the greater portion of them were emigrants. It was also the largest emigrant train that has gone past here for a long time. Yes, I think it was the largest since I've been here. That time that Sivert Sneensgjerdet had emigrants with him it could be we were just as many. And for another thing, I can report that all who emigrated from Soknedal and Storen boarded the 5th of this month at Trondhjem, arrived here well and happy as far as Eau Claire. They had had good weather on the trip and especially so on the Atlantic Ocean. I can then greet you from several of the acquaintances amongst the emigrants, but that would be too long a list to enumerate the names of all those here, so this will have to be enough on this subject.

Nothing new of importance do I know to report to you this time. Everything around her is as usual. I understand that there at home in Norway signs point to a late spring which is also the situation here. Today it is the 26th, but it is still cold weather and not much accomplished with the spring-work, but we will hope that it will be better by the 1st. Not many sawmills have started up yet, but most have decided to start this coming Monday, the 30th. Yesterday I was out and had a talk with the company I worked for last summer and came to an agreement to work for them this summer also. Here you see I am known the best and can get the biggest pay and the lightest work. This company is known as "Valley Lumber Compagny", mill here in the city. and has decided to start up next Monday. Nothing further for this time than an affectionate greeting from your devoted grandson

A.P.Solem

You may greet Siri and the others in the household.
I am to greet you and Siri from Berit N. D. Estenstad

* N D stands for Nilsdatter (Nils Daughter)

Dear Grandfather!

So this year 1883 is the 5th Christmas Festival I should be celebrating or observing on this side of the great Atlantic Ocean, which most years has been poorly observed because of my place of residence, namely the woods. I do not mean that living in the woods is so cramped and bad. No, far from it. Out in the woods all of the men who are in good health have in all respects everything marvelously well provided. But, according to God's Word, which I am not always in the proper position and not always thoroughly experienced to quote: "God's Kingdom is not eating and drinking, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit". Understand this is what is most lacking and should be of the utmost importance.

But in this respect it is better than many believe and think it is. Even though there are no churches or ministers in the vicinity, one finds everywhere in the woods quite good conduct and order. I will say better than in many large cities which are deplorable in one respect, but also praiseworthy on the other hand. Here I see much is implied and gives the occasion for posing many questions, which I am constrained to pass over for the lack of space.

Just that I will give a short explanation of, namely, How does it happen they live more orderly in the woods? Answer, because many who are in the woods are addicted to the pleasure of strong drink, and which makes them nearly rave when they live in town, but which is very seldom in the woods because then it is a long way to the nearest town, and therefore more difficult to get the hard liquor. Enough of this for one time.

With regard to America's religious situation, I believe and others with me, that it is good, especially here in town as there are no less than three Norwegian Lutheran Churches and how many more of other nationalities, I cannot with certainty say. There are many many churches, but there are also many sects or different teachings. Here also are good and Christian ministers who can measure up with the present pastor in Støren parish. Yes, this I maintain is not saying too much.

I am working yet on the railroad which I mentioned in my last letter to you all, but we are just now finished here and if I have no opportunity down there I will ^{have to} go to the woods a while. The snow was long in coming this fall, but now two days ago there came about 16 inches, which enlived the woods traffic considerably. I do not have much news to report to you. Dead is your acquaintance Ole N. Sneensflaatten who slept away into his last rest 5 days ago after a few days illness. Kari N.D.*Estenstadsoien slept away a month ago. Your words of the 26th of last month I received 4 days ago and for which I say many thanks. We see thereby that you are well and I say that this is the greatest blessing which we have here on earth. I can read every word in the letter. I see you wistfully say "Were I in condition for that" -

In condition for that we believe of course that you are, and how joyous it would also be for us to see you. But it is, I suppose, doubtful, and we won't believe it until we see it. You are greeted fondly by your grandson

A.P. Solem

Finally I must greet you and Siri most affectionately from my wife. Also, a happy New Year.

* N.D. is apparently Anders way of abbreviating Nilsdatter or Nils' Daughter.