



# The Georg Sverdrup Society

## NEWSLETTER

### Minot To Host “Sverdrup and Missions” Discussion Forum in April

Bethel Lutheran Church of Minot, North Dakota, will host the third “Sverdrup and Missions” Discussion Forum on Saturday, April 19, 2008. The discussion will begin at 9:00 a.m. and continue until noon. Lunch will be served.

Rev. Robert Lee will present a paper on the context for understanding Sverdrup’s interest in missions, and Dr. Francis Monseth will present a paper highlighting the importance of the congregation and its involvement in mis-

sions. Rev. Ronald Dahle will present a paper on the fruits of Sverdrup’s mission emphasis, from the perspective of his family members who were early missionaries to Madagascar. A discussion will follow each presentation.

Rev. Lloyd Quanbeck, pastor of Bethel Lutheran, extends a warm welcome to all who have an interest in missions. Bring a guest and take part in the event.

### Discussion Forums Held on “Sverdrup and Missions”

The Georg Sverdrup Society recently held two discussion forums entitled “Sverdrup and Missions.” The first was at Bethany Lutheran Church, rural Abercrombie, North Dakota, on November 10. Rev. Robert L. Lee presented a paper on influences leading to Sverdrup’s zeal for missions, and Dr. Francis W. Monseth presented a paper on the relationship between congregations and missions. Seminarian Sam Wellumson delivered Sverdrup’s recently translated 1885 oration, “Students and Missions.” A discussion followed.

On February 8, the GSS held a second discussion forum on “Sverdrup and Missions” at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary chapel in Minneapolis. Rev. Robert Lee presented a paper entitled, “Sverdrup and Missions: The Context,” Dr. Francis Monseth presented a paper on “Sverdrup and Missions: The Congregation,” and Dr. Carl Vaagenes, a former missionary to Madagascar, presented a paper entitled, “Sverdrup and Missions: From Augsburg to Madagascar.” Rev. Del Palmer, AFLC World Missions Director, gave a brief devotional. A

### Annual Meeting Notice

The 2008 Annual Meeting of the Georg Sverdrup Society will be held Saturday, Oct. 25, at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Fargo, North Dakota.



Bethany Lutheran Church, Abercrombie, North Dakota, one of the thirteen original LFC congregations, was the site of a Society discussion forum on “Sverdrup and Missions” on Nov. 10, 2007.

discussion period followed each paper.

The papers presented will appear in *The Sverdrup Journal*, to be published this spring.

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### Georg Sverdrup

- Born to Pastor Harold Ulrich Sverdrup and his wife Caroline Metella, nee Suur, at Balestrand, Sogn, Norway, on December 16, 1848.
- Died on May 3, 1907, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and buried in the Lakewood Cemetery.

## Mrs. Elizabeth Karoline Tou

Translation by Raynard O. J. Huglen

*Rev. Erik Tou and his wife Elizabeth were the second Norwegian-American Lutheran missionaries sent out from Augsburg Seminary. Erik Tou graduated from Augsburg Seminary in 1889 and together with his new bride sailed for Madagascar. After twelve difficult years, Mrs. Tou died. Two years later, Rev. Tou, broken in health, returned to the United States, where he served parishes in North and South Dakota until his death in 1917.*

*The following obituary appeared in the June 1901 issue of Gasseren, the periodical Georg Sverdrup founded in 1900 to promote missions in the Lutheran Free Church.*

*This article has been edited for space.*

She was born January 31, 1867, on the Kjelstad farm, Indre Holmedal, Sondfjord, Norway. The year she was born her parents emigrated to America and settled in Illinois.

From there they moved to their present home in Fulton Township, Webster County, Iowa. Together with two other families, they were the first settlers in that area. They had to dig out a house and home in the earth, work day and night to make a home for themselves.

Those were hard circumstances, but harder was the arrival of various illnesses, especially the year-long malarial fever which struck the whole family. Whatever could be earned and saved went to doctors, who could do little for it. These people, who were content with little, rejoiced when Pastor [Andreas] Aaserød came to them now and then and brought relief to their loneliness with his beautiful singing and brought God's comforting Word to the hungry, simple souls and hearts. He was received as an angel of God each time he came.

In 1889, at the age of twenty-two, she was married to Missionary [Erik] Tou, who was ready to travel to Madagascar. They were sent to Tulear on the west coast of Madagascar to work with Pastor Røstvig.

Because of the war between the Hova and the Sakalava tribes, they had to flee to Sando Nosive together with the remaining mission personnel after only a two-month stay. After one month's stay there, they moved on to St. Augustine.

There they renewed their acquaintance with the fever [malaria]. And Mrs. Tou, who had given birth to her first-born there, contracted confinement fever. This illness never completely left her. What made the illness both painful and persistent was that no one understood it. She was treated the first year as a malaria patient.

Pastor Tou left his mortally ill wife and child at the home of Pastor Andreason while he went out alone to work with the Anatosierna. After three months, he returned to fetch his wife and child. Instead, he arrived just in time to see their child die, and he attended the funeral.

They then traveled up over the Onilahy River. It took eight days. The days were sweltering, and the nights by the river were very cool and damp. During this trip, they fell into the hands of robbers for about a day. They were constantly threatened with death, but the whole time they were in quiet prayer to the Lord, completely at peace, resigned to His Will. However, the robbers didn't kill them. They learned later that the robbers couldn't understand what kind of supernatural power possessed these people who accepted their fate with such peace.

We will not go into a description of the little Anatosi hut in which they lived for five months until a hurri-

cane tore it to pieces. It was a place of much suffering, sickness, and sorrow.

But Mrs. Tou kept up her courage and transformed "Augsburg"<sup>1</sup> into a true Paradise of satisfaction and contentment, coziness and peace.

In 1892, she took in two [Malagasy] children, Marie and Walter Scot. They had been sentenced to be buried alive,<sup>2</sup> but now that "the white lady" had taken them in, people saw that they [the white people] lived even though they had accepted such children.

In those days it wasn't easy to get help. In the course of a year, they had twelve different cooks. It was impossible to get anyone to wash clothes or diapers for the little ones. They were advised to buy slaves, but they would not. To add to their misery, the king forbade his subjects to sell milk to the whites.

Many of the children Mrs. Tou took in were nursing children, weak children, sick children, and children born with ugly, contagious illnesses. No one can tell how many of these children Mrs. Tou helped.

No one can count all the wakeful nights and the horrors she endured for the sake of the children—the care she took, the persevering patience, the pangs of conscience she felt when her arms were full of children and she had to say no to others who entreated her to take their children also. Still, when she was home and free from all the hard work, she would say, "I wish that I had done my work, more out of love for Jesus than I have done. I had compassion, sympathy enough, but I think constantly that having love enough for Jesus' sake

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Mrs. Elizabeth Karoline Tou (cont.)

would do the work. . .” She would often sigh and express a wish for a strong and healthy woman to come and devote herself to this work—someone who would live for the work, die for the work, be a mother to the motherless and fatherless.

When Pastor Tou had to make a trip to the coast, he would commit his wife and children to God the Father’s gracious protection, with only one man to guard the Station.

One day robbers came. The watchman guarding the station knew what kind of people they were and told Mrs. Tou. Mrs. Tou went after a flask of lye and showed it to the robber. “Here is the ‘oil’ [my husband] gave me to defend myself. And if you and those with you don’t leave quickly, you will lose your eyesight.” The robbers took flight as fast as they could and did not return.

When Mahasalierne later assaulted the town, 200 strong, Mrs. Tou climbed up on a housetop and stood and looked out on the wild scene. This greatly surprised the

robbers. The woman’s courage was something they had never seen before.

When she was asked, “Aren’t you ever gripped by fear in the night when you lie alone at home?” she would answer, “No, I read one of the many beautiful Psalms in the Bible, commit myself to God, and sleep completely sure and fearless.”

Two or three times fear gripped her. Once, before the Sakalava war, they had to flee to sea in an open boat. Later, the kings combined to kill the missionaries. It was that year that they traveled home.

Even now, no white has mastered the Anatosis language as well as Mrs. Tou did. She spoke the language as plainly and clearly as one native-born. As a result she was held in high regard and loved by the natives, not only the few who were Christians.

And now that she had won their confidence, she was finally able to converse intimately with these women and talk with them about the faith and hope she had within her.

But now she lies in the company of black-skinned people, her children at her side, and awaits the resurrection morning.

She died at the age of 34 years and 18 days. Death came unexpectedly and suddenly. She was glad and happy, talking and smiling, right up to the time of her death. Then a hard, short struggle, and all was over. She had confessed her faith in her Savior; and trusting in His grace, she entered the joy of the Lord.

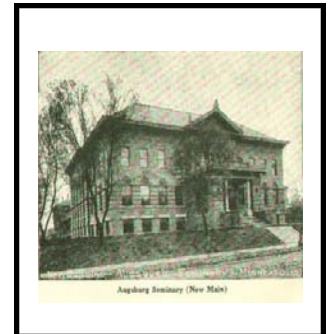


Mrs. Elizabeth Tou

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The Tous, who started this station, named it “Augsburg” after the seminary from which Tou had graduated. The name was later changed to “Manasoa.”

<sup>2</sup> Malagasy tribal custom condemned to death all children born on “unlucky” days. Anyone who rescued them was supposed to be cursed to die.



## Sverdrup Society Website

Members and friends of the Georg Sverdrup Society with internet connections are reminded to check our website at [georgsverdrup.org](http://georgsverdrup.org). It included the mission statement of the society, a list of the current directors, and the following translations:

*The Norwegian Lutheran Churches in America* (1897),  
*The Free Church Fellowship* (1877-78),

*The Lutheran Free Church* (1897),

*David and Jonathan* (1877),

*The Principles of Augsburg* (1894) delivered on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Augsburg Seminary, and

A Sermon on John 14:23-31 preached by Professor Sverdrup on Pentecost Sunday, 1902, at Trinity Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN.

There is also a link for those who desire to receive further information about the society.

We are grateful to member Nathaniel Olson, Fargo, ND, for maintaining the site. Future plans call for the inclusion of a biographical sketch of Sverdrup plus other translated material.



## THE GEORG SVERDRUP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

317 South Third Street  
Kenyon, Minnesota 55946

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### Ordet Blev Rjød

*(The Word Became Flesh)*

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#### Directors

Loiell Dyrud, President  
Francis Monseth, Vice President  
Terry Olson, Secretary  
Martin Horn, Treasurer  
Marian Christopherson  
Dennis Gray  
Robert Lee

Larry Walker, Editor

Prospective members are invited  
to contact the secretary at the  
above address.

## Professor Sverdrup on Vacation

*Rev. Ron Dahle shared some of the memoirs of his Aunt Astrid at the Oct. 13 meeting. His grandfather, Rev. Ole Dahle, was an Augsburg graduate and a friend of Prof. Sverdrup, who used to spend vacations at their home on Farm Island Lake, near Aitkin, MN.*

There were many visitors . . . but the one who came the oftenest, stayed the longest, and was beloved as no other was Prof. Geo. J. Sverdrup, Sr. . . .

One summer, to the delight of us children, he had Mrs. Sverdrup and a little daughter with him. Another time he had two daughters. They were great comrades for us. They told us stories of all sorts and went swimming with us in the lake and hiking in the woods. Sverdrup had a botany book he brought for one of the girls, and they used to hunt flower specimens together. . . . His daughter used to delight us with her organ music (she was only eleven at that time). . . .

Prof. Sverdrup . . . made us happy many times by rewards he gave for difficult performances. Trygve, especially, was his delight. Trygve was so versatile that he kept Sverdrup pretty busy admiring the many things he could do. He got five cents for climbing a tree and five cents for carrying away the cat when Mrs. Sverdrup was about. He always brought us children candy when he came and made the evenings lively for Father and Mother with his humor. We children in bed upstairs heard them laughing down below, and I used to wonder what they had so much fun about.

One day as Mother was scolding one of the boys for something he had done, Sverdrup happened to be near. When she was through, he said laconically, "Yes, Mrs. Dahle, I can well understand that you have never been a boy."

He and Father enjoyed sailing together. They fished together, went out to the mill for lumber, and were almost ship-wrecked on the island in a storm that came up. . . .

Although he came for vacation . . . , he didn't want to make extra work for a busy mother. . . by forcing her to make two meals in the precious hours of the morning. After breakfast he would say, "Now, Mrs. Dahle, what time must the fish be here so as to be ready for dinner?"

"Ten o'clock, Prof. Sverdrup," Mother would reply. And sharp at ten he was there with the fish. How he managed to get the fish to come bite on his hook . . . , I never discovered, but come with the fish he did, and that most punctually.

There was grief down the whole line when he finally got his own cottage on Lake Minnetonka, for then he went there in place of coming to Farm Island Lake. The summers didn't seem so rich without him and his family. We always loved him and remembered him as a genuine Christian gentleman of the highest type.

## The Sverdrup Islands: Norway's Claim in North America

By Robert L. Lee

Did you know that Norway had a 20th Century legal claim to a portion of North America, based on the arctic explorations of a distant cousin of Prof. Georg Sverdrup's?



Otto Neumann Sverdrup (1854-1930) is ranked as one of Norway's greatest polar explorers.

He went to sea at age seventeen and in 1888 served with Fridtjof Nansen's expedition across the Greenland icecap. He was the chief person responsible for the construction of the famous polar vessel *Fram* and served as captain on its historic North Pole voyage. A second major voyage up the west coast

of Greenland to Ellesmere Island, involving a dangerous research journey by dogsled, led to the charting of more new land than any other polar expedition in history.

His final expeditions were in 1914-15 and 1920 under the Russian flag—first a convoy through Arctic Siberian waters in an attempt to develop a commercial route in the northern sea and a later rescue of a stranded Russian expedition.

The North American claim is based on an 1892-1902 Arctic expedition, when Sverdrup discovered three previously unknown islands, which he claimed for Norway. His homeland was pursuing independence from Sweden at the time, so for many years little attention was paid to the claim.

Canada grew concerned when Sverdrup

encouraged his government to press the claim by sending patrols to police his namesake islands. Negotiations began between Great Britain, Canada, Norway, and Sverdrup himself. The meetings were cordial, ending in a pact signed Nov. 11, 1930. Norway surrendered all rights to the Sverdrup Islands, and the explorer was paid \$67,000 by Canada, supposedly in exchange for his original maps and journals.

Otto Sverdrup never enjoyed his financial windfall, as he died sixteen days after the settlement. In 1957 a monument was dedicated to him in Steinkjer, Norway, his family's home town. Otto Sverdrup stamps were issued in Canada, Greenland, and Norway in 2004, on the 150th anniversary of his birth.