

# Aurland Newsletter

## Past and Present

Volume VII, Issue 1      Ann Romo, Editor      [annromo04@yahoo.com](mailto:annromo04@yahoo.com)      January, February, March 2006  
36735 Cty 1 Blvd, Cannon Falls, MN 55009 -Millie Ohnstad, Asst.Editor      [mohnstad@frontiernet.net](mailto:mohnstad@frontiernet.net) - Published quarterly

From the editor: We have lots of things to include this month. We are so grateful for people sending us such interesting articles.

Jackie Ranby has reviewed "**The Children's Blizzrd**", a book by David Laskin. It is to the right.

**Gloria (Berquam) Peter** is a cousin to many subscribers. Leon Hanson, Cannon Falls, wrote a touching story about her and her family which was published in the Today magazine. It starts on page 2.

**Lois Walfrid Johnson** has another book out. See page 4 for her Viking Quest series of books.

**Anders Ohnstad**, Aurland, has written a story about **Olina Ohnstad** who was born in the 1840's. Find her picture and the story on page 5.

Joel Husebo submitted a story that **Jim Rice** wrote about his gr-grandfather, **Lars Rognvald Ohnstad**. Find it on pages 6-7. Also on page 7, find some information about our **Aurland Steven/Reunion** which will be July 30<sup>th</sup> and the **Sogn/Voss Heritage Tour**.

**Åsmund Ohnstad** has written a short story from 19<sup>th</sup> century farm life. Find "**The Church Visit**" on pages 8-9. Also find **Robert Widme's** obituary on 9.

**Arne Brekke** has found he has more relatives in America. He has written about **Askjell Nilsen Flâm**, who was a brother to his gr-gr-grandfather. He wants to know if there are more descendants in this family. See his story on pages 10-11.

Millie Ohnstad and I have a project still in the works of cataloging the **Urland Church cemetery records**. The cemetery board had asked her to update the directory at the cemetery, but she didn't want to do that until the ministerial records had been checked. There are 166 family plots in the older part of the cemetery, of which the first 23 are listed on pages 12-15 and the plot map is on pages 16-17.

Our condolences go to Gordon Eddy and his wife Brit and their family. Gordon's mother, Irene Staven Treangen, died November 5th. He has her obituary and those of Iola Veum Dosser and Selma Tokvam Peterson on pages 18-19. Gordon has written about his mother's family, in "**Out on the Black Hammer**" on 20-21.

One of our Aurland descendants, **Orville Otterness** of North Branch was honored this summer to be the **Grand Marshall** of the annual summer celebration there. See his story and pictures on page 22.

## The Children's Blizzard

David Laskin (Harper Collins, 2004)

Reviewed by Jackie Lee Ranby

I recently finished a book called "The Children's Blizzard", by David Laskin. It was excellent and quite moving as it described the horrible blizzard of 12 January 1888 on the prairies. It starts off with these words: "January 12, 1888, began as an unseasonably warm morning across Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Minnesota, the weather so mild that children walked to school without coats and gloves. But that afternoon, without warning, the atmosphere suddenly, violently changed. One moment the air was calm; the next the sky exploded in a raging chaos of horizontal snow and hurricane-force winds." In 3 minutes the front dropped temperatures by 18 degrees. It was called the children's blizzard because so many children and school teachers died in this blizzard. Estimates are that up to 500 people died from this blizzard.

Laskin says that there was a mystique about the Dakotas in the 1880's. The population of the Dakota Territory quadrupled from 135,177 to 511,527 from 1880 -1890. The number of farms increased 5 1/2 times from 17,435 to 95,204. The prairie proved profitable for wealthy investors who grazed cattle. But it was also a harsh, unforgiving place where pioneers worked very hard just to provide food and shelter for their families. There were drought conditions in the summer of 1887. The winter of 1887-1888 started with "two months of zero weather", and was a bad one. On Dec. 29th it was 46 below in MN. On January 11th there was a 40 degree rise in temperatures in 24 hours.

David Laskin used written histories of many of the people who did survive the storm, as well as newspaper accounts. He follows the Norwegians, Swedes, Germans, and other groups who came to America to better their lives. He also tells of the fledgling Weather Bureau and their attempts to predict the weather and warn communities. Because of the warmer weather that day many children went to school for the first time in weeks, and farmers went out to look after their animals. The southern and eastern part of Dakota, the western part of Minnesota, and northern Nebraska suffered the majority of deaths. Some families lost three children and a parent on the same day.

There were stories of heroic rescues and of school teachers risking their lives to save their students. There were also stories of terrible suffering; of children dying within yards of their homes. This book certainly will add to your understanding of the lives of those who settled the prairies.