



# 115 years of the Home's History

## 1903 to 2018



*Compiled By George A. Jensen*

**H**ow does an institution such as the Norwegian Christian Home and Health Center get started? It usually is initiated by a need. At the turn of the twentieth century there were many immigrants who had left their families in Europe years before and now in their senior years had no one to turn to for help. In order to meet the need there has to be someone who is sensitive to a



Amanda Hanson



George Hanson

situation and has a strong desire to help. Such was the case with George and Amanda Hanson. Where did this passion to address the needs of helpless indigent Scandinavian women come from? The love of Jesus Christ dwelt in the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Hanson. A deep Christian love for their fellow man was instilled in the Hanson's and the burden to care for the helpless was more than they could bear.

George Hanson came to the United States from Trondheim, Norway. He was an awning maker by trade. While he traveled about the City, he observed many old Scandinavian women who were helpless, penniless and living under circumstances similar to the homeless in today's society. Undoubtedly, he related his daily experiences and observations to his Swedish wife, Amanda and together they were burdened to take a step of faith. They decided to lease a house at 57 Douglass Street in Brooklyn. The date was December 1902 and the cost was \$35 per month, not an insignificant amount for a couple with limited means. But they were convinced that God had prompted them to do so and that He would provide. They, themselves, moved into the house and invited their friends to experience this home filled with love and Christian atmosphere.

On January 16, 1903 they admitted their first woman guest. The second entered the next day and the third and fourth were welcomed in February and March of the same year. Amanda Hanson served as the first matron.

Even before the first resident arrived, George and Amanda recognized that their task would require a support group. On January 1, 1903 a meeting was held at the Douglass Street home with a circle of friends sympathetic to their new cause. At this meeting, the Rev. Thomas J. Franson dedicated the Home under the name of Hanson's Scandinavian Home for Old Ladies. There was no one present at the ceremony of sufficient means to underwrite this endeavor, but there was the encouragement that they would support this new ministry to the best of their ability.



57 Douglass Street, 1903

Operating the Home and caring for the residents proved to be an overwhelming task for George, Amanda and their small circle of friends. It seemed prudent to expand involvement in the Home by appealing to a wider group of compassionate and sympathetic supporters. Consequently, a society was formed at a meeting held on April 14, 1903 with the following present:

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Mr. George B. Hanson | Mrs. Amanda Hanson |
| Mrs. Susanna Nilsen  | Mrs. Johanna Olsen |
| Mr. Thomas G Thomsen | Mr. Andreas Olsen  |
| Mr. Tobias Knudsen   | Mr. Ole Bentsen    |
| Mr. Harry Halvorsen  | Mr. Michael Hammer |

Following the formation of this Society, the institution was incorporated on May 11, 1903 and the name changed to Scandinavian Old Ladies Home of Brooklyn, N. Y. The signers of the new corporation were George B. Hanson, Andreas Olsen, Thomas G. Thomsen, Tobias Knudsen and Ole Bentsen.

The first Trustees and officers of the Home were:

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Mr. George B. Hanson, President         | Mr. Harry Halvorsen   |
| Rev. C. G. Ellstrom, Vice President     | Mrs. Johanna Olsen    |
| Mr. F. Teden, Treasurer                 | Mrs. Susanna Niles    |
| Mr. Ole Bentsen, Secretary              | Mr. Thomas G. Thomson |
| Mr. H. C. Pedersen, Financial Secretary | Mrs. Augusta Colin    |

Mrs. Amanda Hanson would continue to serve as matron. With a new official organization, Mr. & Mrs. Hanson donated the furniture and equipment to the corporation.

It wasn't long before the ministry of this Home became known and applications for admission were more than the house on Douglass Street could accommodate. Before the year was over, the Home moved to new facilities. A frame house located at 1244 - 67th Street, in a totally different neighborhood was being used as an orphanage for Scandinavian children and was known as the Kallman Scandinavian Orphanage. That organization decided to move to larger quarters in another location in Brooklyn and sold this property to the Home for \$6,500.



How was this newly formed Scandinavian Old Ladies Home, barely eight months old, able to purchase property in this short period of time? The organization barely had funds to operate. This became a great test of faith for the Trustees and the Society.

What did the lenders think? They must have had confidence in the Home's Trustees. A first mortgage of \$4,000 was obtained, a second mortgage for \$2,000 was given and the balance of \$500 was paid with the help of loans from good friends. After some alterations to the new facility, the building at 57 Douglass Street was vacated and the residents were moved on November 27, 1903 to the building that was located on a portion of the present campus. This building first housed five ladies, and by May of 1904 that number had grown to thirteen. This new location provided much more spacious surroundings compared to the narrow attached brownstone building on Douglass Street.

The Secretary described it as follows in the third Annual Report in 1906: "The Home is pleasantly situated, and in summer more especially it is, indeed, a very charming place. The cottage is spacious, and the rooms comfortably furnished, with the dining room in the basement, the parlors on the ground floor, and the bedrooms on the upper two stories, and with a sitting room on each of these upper floors. The ground around the house affords quite a little garden, and there the old ladies can sit and read, sew or knit, or walk about, inside and outside the grounds and spend quiet and restful hours. The care of the flowers

and vines gives pleasant occupation to those who like that kind of work. There is also a piazza at the front and side of the house, which is cool and shady under the vines, which protect it from the sun. And in the summer afternoons, on benches back of the house the old ladies can invariably be seen enjoying their afternoon coffee under the cool shade of the cherry trees."



Scandinavian Old Ladies Home residents and matrons

A sense of joy, satisfaction and pride exudes in the description of the new facility. The Home now owned its first house. The day-to-day caring of the women residents and the responsibility for the Home rested with the matrons who were accountable to the Board of Trustees. Amanda Hanson served from the inception of the ministry until May 1904, and was followed by Mrs. Augusta Colin who later married Mr. H. C. Pedersen, the first Financial Secretary. She served until June 1, 1905, when Miss Ellen Lee assumed the position. Miss Agnette Stiansen, who served from January 1, 1906 until September 1909, replaced Miss Lee.

Following Miss Stiansen were:

- |                                      |                                   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Miss Helene Nilsen 1909 - 1916       | Mrs. Herman S. Fauske 1945 - 1947 |
| Miss Hanna C. Gunvaldsen 1916 - 1920 | Mrs. Hilda Sande 1948 - 1953      |
| Miss Magda Gausaa 1920 - 1921        | Mrs. Gladys Ulvedal 1953 - 1959   |
| Miss Amalie Fuhr 1921 - 1923         | Mrs. Lina Myckland 1959 - 1960    |
| Miss Gulla Jorgensen 1923 - 1924     | Mrs. Theodora Meberg 1960 - 1964  |
| Miss Kristine Jacobsen 1924 - 1929   | Mrs. Petra Fredriksen 1964        |
| Mrs. Hilda Sande 1929 - 1939         | Mrs. Judith Ribe 1964 - 1966      |
| Miss S. Halvorsen 1939 - 1940        | Mrs. Olga Ribe 1967 - 1968        |
| Mrs. Morton Larsen 1940 - 1943       | Mrs. Helen Thompsen 1968 - 1971   |
| Mrs. R. S. Gjerde 1943 - 1945        |                                   |

It appears that during the period between 1930 and 1971 the operation of the Home was delegated to a minister whose title was Superintendent. His wife became the Matron. The operation and organization was modified in 1972 or 1973 so that the duties of matrons were changed and the operation of the Home was the responsibility of an Administrator.



Mrs. Hilda Sande, Matron



Rev. O. O. Sande, Superintendent

Records indicate that the first appearance of a Superintendent to manage the Home came with the appointment of Rev. & Mrs. Ole O. Sande in 1929 who served until 1939. The title of the position changed from Superintendent to Administrator, to President and then Executive Director.

Succeeding Rev. Sande through the years were:

Mr. Morton Larsen	1940 - 1943
Rev. R. S. Gjerde	1943 - 1945
Rev. Herman Fauske	1945 - 1948
Rev. Ole O. Sande	1948 - 1953
Rev. Osmund Ulvedal	1953 - 1959
Rev. Thorleif Myckland	1959 - 1960
Rev. O. E. Meberg	1960 - 1964
Rev. John Ribe	1964 - 1969
Rev. Samuel Brattlie	1969 - 1993
Rev. Edgar Jensen	1994 - 2000
Rev. Michael Doherty	2000 - 2006
Earnest K. Ragin	2006 - 2018
Anthony Restaino	2019

In the early days of the Home, the policy-making body of the Home was entrusted to the Officers and Trustees. This body was subsequently renamed as the Board of Directors sometime during the Home's first 25 years. Chairing this group, in

some cases, has been a long-term commitment. The position was termed President of the Board and later changed to Chairman of the Board.



George B. Hanson



H. C. Pedersen



P.R. Odland



R. Hall



H. Evensen



K. Hansen



J. Olsen



E. Eriksen



H. Wartdal



O. M. Thompson



J. Carlson

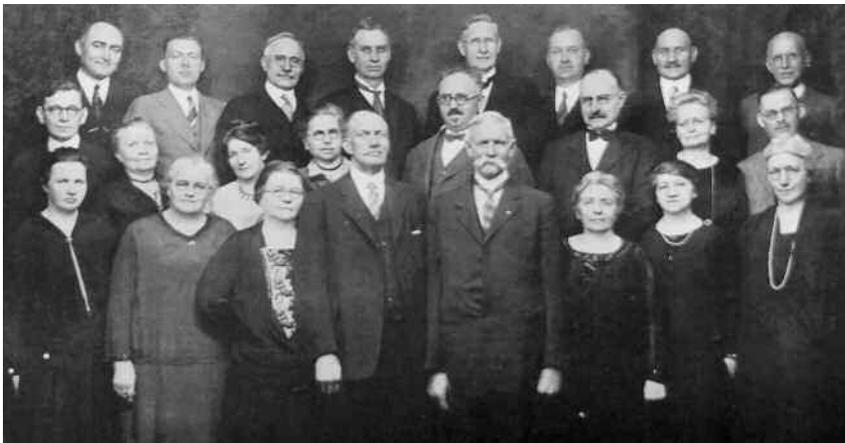


G. Jensen

Chairing the Board has been the following:

Mr. George B. Hanson	1903 - 1904
Mr. H. C. Pedersen	1904 - 1920
Mr. P. Rasmussen Odland	1921
Mr. H. C. Pedersen	1922
Mr. Reinhard Hall	1923 - 1943
Mr. Hans Evensen	1944 - 1949
Mr. Knud L. Hansen	1950 - 1951
Mr. John Olsen	1952 - 1958
Mr. Erik M. Eriksen	1959 - 1963
Mr. Hjalmar Wartdal	1964
Mr. Erik M. Eriksen	1965 - 1968
Mr. O. Magnus Thompson	1969 - 1993
Mr. John L. Carlson	1994 - 1995
Mr. George A. Jensen	1996 - present

The earliest photograph of the Board of Directors seems to be that of the 1928 Board, which served during the Silver Anniversary year. The Board consisted of 24 members, ten of whom were ladies.



First row: Mrs. Andersen, Alma Belf, Mrs. Reinhard Hall, Reinhard Hall, H. C. Pedersen, Ella Steen, Mrs. J. Gustafsen.  
 Second row: John Olsen, Mrs. J. Clausen, Mrs. Gustav Pettersen, Mrs. S. Halvorsen, Oscar Lehne, E. P. Backie, Mrs. John Eklund, Thorvald Gundersen. Third row: E. M. Eriksen, C. W. Marum, P. R. Odland, Rev. N. W. Nelson, Rev. S. O. Sigmund. Rev. O. M. Jonsvold, Harald Hall, Peder Olsen

The next photograph appears for the Golden Anniversary in 1953 and there was no one on the Board in 1928 who was still serving in 1953.



First row: Peter Abrahamsen, Ole P. Tregde, John Olsen, S. Abraham Larsen, Erik M. Eriksen, Rev. Ludvig W. Jansen  
 Second: Oscar O. Olsen, Nancy Reinertsen, Ragna Roko, Kristine Halvorsen, Ingrid Christiansen, Magnhild Tjornhom, Lall Nilsen, Elida Thompsen, Marie Andersen, Gunnar A. Jensen Third: Arthur Helgesen, Martin Luther, Johan Rosenvold, Vincent Reiso, S. Carl Thorsen

In contrast, there were three members of the 75th Anniversary Board that were still members of the 90th Anniversary Board of Directors:



1993 Board - Seated: Rev. Samuel Brattlie, Marion Fauske, O. Magnus Thompson  
Standing: Leif Meberg, John L. Carlson, Magnus Hansen, Rev. Edgar Jensen,  
Arnold Nilsen, Sigurd Olsen, Frank Govertsen, John Mortensen, Peder Skeie,  
Stanley Ramsdal. Missing: George A. Jensen

The Home prospered in the early years, gaining interest and support, mainly from the Norwegian speaking churches. By 1906, the number of residents in this modest wood frame house at 1244 - 67th Street had grown to fifteen, virtually reaching its capacity. The demand for entrance continued, but because of space limitations, applicants had to be turned away. The far-sighted Board recognized the trend and purchased vacant adjoining lots as they became available in 1905 and 1906. By so doing, the grounds measured 120' along 67th Street by 130' towards Ovington Avenue.

In 1907, another resident was admitted and the Home thereby reached its ultimate capacity of sixteen. Recording Secretary Mr. Ole Bentsen reported on this situation in the 1907 Annual Report: *" 16 applicants have swelled our list for admission to the Home, and there is nothing that makes us feel so sorry as to have to answer that there is no room for them, and especially for those who are poor and in need. We have 31 on the list at the present time. We may state that we have in view the erection of a much larger home. The ground is already secured and paid for, but a building fund is needed and we are looking up to God and to you, our faithful friends, so that there may soon be opened up some way in which we may be able to take care of more of those who really need a Home and a resting place in their declining years."*

The Board considered an addition to the existing building to relieve this pressing need, but God had a better plan. At the same time, changes relating to the composition of the residents were developing.

When the Home was started, the doors were open to women with Swedish, Danish and Norwegian roots, hence the name, "Scandinavian Old Ladies Home of Brooklyn, New York." By coincidence, the majority of the earlier residents were of Swedish background but the composition of the corporation's Society was virtually all Norwegian - American. Although this did not create any controversy or conflict with the Danish and Swedish communities, each decided to establish similar homes to care for their constituency. The 1910 United States Federal Census lists the staff and residents:

State: New York 1910 United States Federal Census Enumeration District: 1070  
 County: Kings Street Number: 30  
 City, township: Brooklyn Call Number/URL: Enumeration Date: April 16, 1910

Last name	First name	Sex	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Place of birth	Race			Ancestry			Citizenship
							White	Black	Other	Swedish	Norwegian	American	
	<u>WILSON, HELENA</u>	F	42	S		Sweden			Norwegian	Norwegian	Norwegian	USA	
	<u>JENSEN, CAROLINA</u>	F	72	W		Sweden			Swedish	Swedish	Swedish	USA	
	<u>JENSEN, ISORINA</u>	F	57	W		Sweden			Swedish	Swedish	Swedish	USA	
	<u>HANSEN, LUISA</u>	F	43	W		Norway			Norwegian	Norwegian	Norwegian	USA	
	<u>HANSEN, ANNE</u>	F	37	W		Norway			Norwegian	Norwegian	Norwegian	USA	
	<u>ENGELH, SOPHIE</u>	F	39	W		Sweden			Swedish	Swedish	Swedish	USA	
	<u>PETERSON, MARI</u>	F	31	W		Norway			Norwegian	Norwegian	Norwegian	USA	
	<u>ROBERG, ANASTA</u>	F	31	W		Sweden			Swedish	Swedish	Swedish	USA	
	<u>SEDERSTROM, MARGARET</u>	F	41	W		Norway			Norwegian	Norwegian	Norwegian	USA	

*Handwritten note: "Unnatural" with arrow pointing to the citizenship column.*

Language spoken at home	Can read and write English	Can read and write other language	Can speak other language	Can speak English	Can speak other language	Can read and write English	Can read and write other language	Can speak English	Can speak other language	Fluency of English	
										Fluency of English	Fluency of other language
English								Yes	Yes	0	H
Swedish								Yes	Yes		
Swedish								Yes	Yes		
Norwegian								Yes	Yes		
Norwegian								Yes	Yes		
Swedish								Yes	Yes		
Norwegian								Yes	Yes		
Swedish								Yes	Yes		
English								Yes	Yes		

But there was also a need to provide for destitute old men. On April 12, 1911 the Home was reincorporated and the name changed to the "Norwegian Christian Home for the Aged." This paved the way for the admission of men.

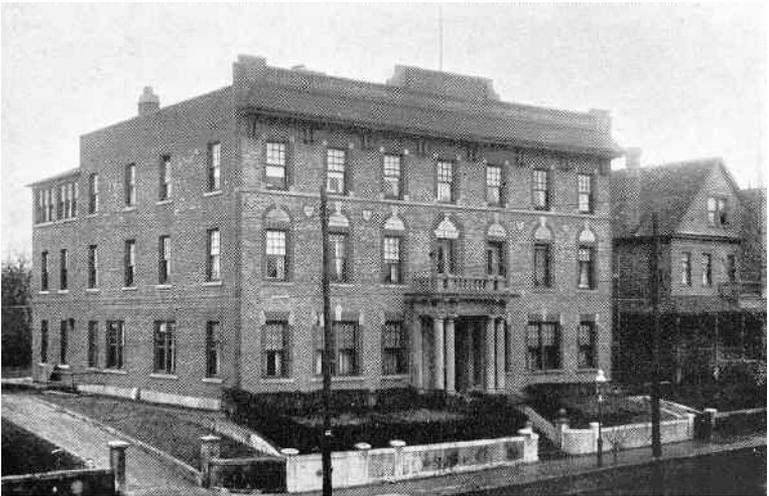
The pressure to expand now became more acute since the Home had been at capacity for a number of years. The treasury did not have a large reserve and there still existed a mortgage on the house. Fortunately, the value of the property had reached \$11,000 so the corporation had some equity. A Building Committee had been formed and a decision was made to construct a new masonry structure to replace the inadequate, unsafe old frame building.

Ground was broken in May 1912 followed by a cornerstone laying ceremony in June, attended by the Norwegian Consul General Ravn. The building was completed that same year and a dedication ceremony was held in the new auditorium, filled to capacity, on November 24, 1912 with the Rev. N. W. Nelson of the Evangelical Free Church delivering the invocation. Rev. Jon Ekeland, pastor of the Norwegian Seaman's Church dedicated the building. Also taking part were Rev. S. O. Sigmond, Rev. O. M. Jonsvold and Rev. Andrew Hansen.



Groundbreaking ceremony on 67th Street, May 1912

On December 10, 1912, the residents from the old frame building were transferred to the new building. Within a short period of time ten more new residents were received. The building had a capacity for forty residents, more than double the number being cared for in the old building. However, the Board was reluctant to fill the Home immediately due to the strain that this increased volume would have on the staff and the treasury. After all, the residents generally had little or no resources to offset the cost of their room, board and other necessities.



The completed Home,, 1912

The construction of this building was financed with a mortgage loan of \$13,500 and the builder was still owed an additional \$3,787. In addition, there still remained a mortgage on the old frame building, although it had been reduced by \$3,500. This was an enormous debt for a small, fledgling non-profit institution. But interest and support for the Home was growing and resources were gradually increasing. Nevertheless, the Board displayed an enormous amount of faith. By 1914, the Home had grown to thirty residents: twenty-six women and four men.

Residents and staff on front steps of Home, 1912

This debt did not deter the far-sighted Board from acquiring an adjoining parcel of land, measuring 50' x 130' in December 1917 for \$1,800. God proved His faithfulness by placing the Home on the hearts of His servants, for by 1919 the mortgage on the new building was reduced to only \$7,000.

The demand for entrance into the Home continued, and by 1922 there were forty-three residents, thirteen of whom lived there free of charge. This demand prompted the Board to add four more bedrooms to the building in addition to a sun parlor, new kitchen and enlarged dining room, all for \$10,000. These facilities were dedicated on September 10, 1922. The Board's vision did not end, for in 1925 an additional adjacent plot of land measuring 40' x 130' was purchased on Ovington Avenue for \$1,600. The trend to purchase adjacent property continued until 2017, when all the adjacent properties consisted of residential dwellings.

By the beginning of 1926, the Home was serving forty-eight residents, of which sixteen were men being housed in the former Kallman Scandinavian Orphanage building. It was recognized that this wood-framed building had outlived its usefulness, and the Home was full to capacity with no room to accommodate the large number of applicants. This prompted the decision to replace this

structure with an adjoining attached fireproof structure as soon as the financial situation allowed. It did not take long. On April 1, 1927 the work was started when the frame structure was demolished. The cost for this undertaking was \$51,000. The Treasury had grown to \$18,000 by this time and with this west wing addition, the Home was able to house a total of sixty-five men and women.



Addition of west wing, 1927

On June 5, 1927, the cornerstone for this new building was laid and fond appreciation was expressed to Amanda Hanson, who was in the audience. This ceremony was followed by a dedication service on October 16, 1927 with Rev. S. O. Sigmond officiating. Upon completion of the additional space, sufficient funds had been raised so that only \$29,000 remained owing for this construction. By this time the General Society numbered about 200 people. The value of this ministry was seen early on, and continues to be viewed as a ministry

rather than a mere institution. While the Home existed on the contributions from friends, it also received assistance from estates. The first, in the amount of \$635.45 was received on September 1916. The combination of estates and donations amounted to \$300,000 during the first 25 years of its history.

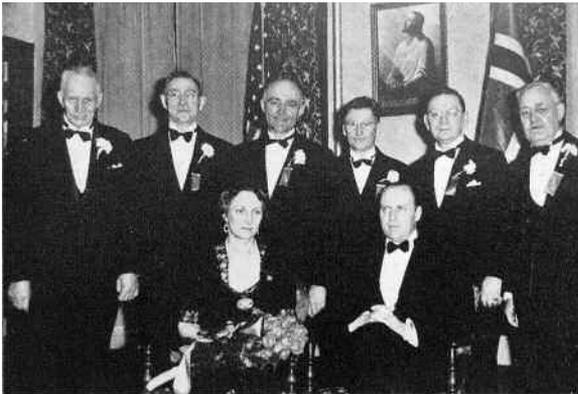


Mr. & Mrs. Ole Roe enjoy a quiet hour in their neat quarters

Although the Home continued to care for destitute persons, it was clear that those with some means would be required to pay for their care. With sixty-five residents to care for there was no question that estates and contributions alone could not support the ministry. The 1920 Annual Report stated, "*The minimum payment for a person to enter the Home shall be not less than five hundred (\$500)*". However, it was expected that an applicant pay more if the individual's financial condition permitted. This was the case during the depression years.

Throughout its history, the Home has had an abundance of applicants. Because of the economic climate during the 1930's, expansion was not feasible, but the care of the residents did not suffer. Then the war years interfered with any plans of expansion.

While WWII had erupted in Europe in September 1939, Norway maintained its traditional neutrality. In the summer of that year, Crown Prince Olav and Crown Princess Martha arrived in New York aboard the M.S. Oslofjord. They paid a visit to the Home, to the delight of the residents and the many friends that gathered in the auditorium. Along with a very complimentary speech, the Crown Prince presented the Home with a framed picture of their Royal Highnesses.



Their royal highnesses, Crown Prince Olav & Crown Princess Martha.

In the "President's Message" recorded in the 1939 - 1940 Annual Report, Reinhard Hall writes: "This year has been extraordinary. Things have occurred which will never repeat themselves. The most outstanding was the visit of the Crown Prince Olav and Crown Princess Martha of

Norway, that beloved country which most of our family emigrated from. We all appreciated that visit very much and found them both charming and lovely. They won everyone's heart and we wish them God's richest blessings. Mr. Hall continued, "*They may never return, but our Lord, the Prince of Peace shall surely return to take His waiting people home. He who won our hearts by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. What a hope for His people at this time when the adversary is doing his utmost to destroy the peace that remains. May we, His people, do our little bit ere He comes.*"

Although Mr. Hall is correct in the sure return of the Prince of Peace, he miscalculated the interest that the Norwegian Royal Family would have in the Home, because Their Royal Highnesses, Crown Prince Olav and Crown Princess Martha would attend the Fortieth Jubilee Dinner held on March 6, 1943. In his address, the Crown Prince praised the humanitarian work done by the Norwegians in Brooklyn and complimented the Home on its endeavors for the "older folks".



The new east wing addition, completed in 1949

However, it was not until 1945 that serious consideration was given to enlarging the facilities to accommodate and care for more infirm friends who needed help. A committee was formed to raise funds for this purpose and in 1948 plans for a new east wing addition to the 1912 building was completed. Ground was broken on June 23, 1949 and on Sunday, September 11, 1949, a cornerstone laying ceremony was held with approximately 1200 people in attendance. An offering in the amount of \$2,400 in cash and pledges was received.



Preparing the residents' meals

The new east wing addition to the Home was dedicated on Sunday, March 26, 1950 to the joy and thankfulness of all who attended. This addition provided a modern and well-equipped kitchen on the street level accompanied by a beautiful and attractive dining room. An elevator was provided making access to all floors more comfortable for both residents and staff. Included in the new facility

was an attractive four-room apartment for the Superintendent and his wife, who

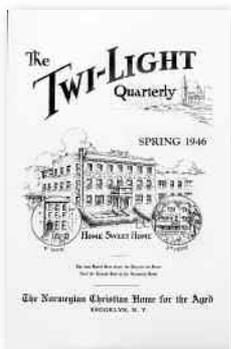
served as the Matron. And finally a roomy and well-equipped office was included for the Superintendent and officers. Rev. Ole O. Sande was the first Superintendent to occupy this new office. It was a marked improvement over the accommodation he was afforded during his first tenure as Superintendent from 1929 - 1939.

Construction costs had risen from the early days of the Home's existence bringing the cost of this building and equipment to \$165,000. The contractor was Thompson-Berg, Inc. and Mr. John Olsen, a dedicated and loyal Board member who would later become President of the Board, chaired the Building Committee. Much of this cost was paid from the proceeds from the "Building Fund Drive" which was initiated some years earlier, as well as some reserve funds.



Pastor O. O. Sande at his desk. On it may be seen photo of Revs. S. Sigmond and N. W. Nelson, former members of the Board of Directors.

The Home would operate from these facilities for many years. Under the seven-year leadership of Mr. John Olsen as President of the Board, the Home



prospered both spiritually and financially. Mr. Olsen held a number of positions at the Home, not the least of which was as the first editor of the Twilight Quarterly. Although the name and the format of the quarterly have changed from its inception in the summer of 1942, it was succeeded by the "VOICE". This publication was initiated to promote the Home as well as to inform and inspire the readers. In addition, he served as Financial Secretary on two occasions and was on many different committees. For his dedication and service to the Home, the title of Director Emeritus was conferred on John Olsen. To further honor him, a flagpole and plaque were erected on the grounds in his memory on September 23, 1979. As an active member of the Bethelship Methodist Church as well, it can be said unequivocally that he served his Lord well.



It was during his tenure that the Home expanded further by purchasing adjoining property on Ovington Avenue, directly behind the main building. This property

was purchased in June 1952 and dedicated on September 14, 1952 as living quarters for some of the staff. Their vacated rooms in the main building were now converted to additional resident rooms.



Staff living quarters on Ovington Avenue.

It was not until the late 1950's that a building designed specifically with apartments to accommodate staff would be satisfied. In 1960, a two-story brick building was completed. An apartment for the superintendent and his family would be made available, as well as facilities for single ladies, many of whom emigrated from Norway and worked at the Home. This building

provided safe, quiet and convenient facilities for its occupants. C. E. Youngdahl Inc., a firm which employed a number of friends and supporters of the Home, constructed it.

The operation of the Home was beginning to get more complicated and regulated in the 1960's. The care of some residents was getting more labor intensive and the need to modernize was becoming evident. This resulted in an upgrading of the second floor of the east wing building in 1967 to include air conditioning in order to accommodate a Skilled Nursing Care unit with 19 beds.

Meanwhile the Royal Family continued their interest in the Home. King Haakon had passed away and Crown Prince Olav became King Olav V. He remembered the Home from the war years and on May 8, 1968 His Majesty King Olav V visited the residents for the first time as King. The Secretary's Annual Report for the year 1968 indicates that the primary purpose of his visit was to personally greet the residents and staff. He lived up to his reputation as the "People's King".



King Olav V, May 10, 1968

The year 1969 started a new era for the Home. Mr. O. Magnus Thompson commenced his tenure as President with the sentiment that as Christians, we have an obligation to serve. Mr. E. M. Eriksen was given a standing ovation at the February 19, 1969 General Society meeting when he was recognized for his nine years of service as President.

At the same time, Rev. Samuel Brattlie became the new Administrator of the Home. Although unknown to them at the time, these two giants in the faith would

form a partnership that would lead the Home for the next 25 years.

The calling of Rev. Brattlie continued the tradition of placing the responsibility for the Home in the hands of a minister. After all, this was a ministry that not only cared for the physical needs of the elderly, but also was even more concerned about one's soul. But during his tenure it became clear that the administration of the Home was occupying more of his time and to fulfill and expand the role of ministering to the spiritual needs of the residents, Chaplains were called to join the staff. Rev. Trygve Fossen was the first to come and serve. He has been followed by a succession of godly men to focus on the spiritual life at the Home. They are:

Rev. Martin Linnerud	Rev. Paul Mathiesen
Rev. Ingvar Andersen	Rev. Robert Sletta
Rev. Stanley Bugge	Rev. Arne Abrahamsen
Rev. William Redekop	

These ministers of the Gospel serve full time in visitation, conducting meetings, preaching, witnessing, counseling and overseeing the spiritual life of the Home.

Many changes took place in the health care industry during this period, but the leadership met each and every challenge. Administrators were required to be licensed. In addition, the government would get more involved in assisting residents without funds. This led to more oversight, audits and inspections that at times resulted in mundane, insignificant, bureaucratic violations, which nevertheless had to be addressed.

The need for care increased as the life expectancy of the population increased. The Home was enjoying the reputation for excellent care and by the end of 1969 the waiting list for entrance was so extensive that many potential candidates were discouraged from even submitting an application. Rev. Brattlie, although new to the health care industry, quickly learned its operation and regulations. He was a visionary, and in his first year the Board of Directors authorized the purchase of another adjoining lot and began discussing future expansion. In his first Annual Report, Rev. Brattlie expressed satisfaction with the quality of the staff and a determination to maintain the Christian culture of the Home.



Sing-a-long led by Rev. Linnerud

In 1970, a Planning Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of John L. Carlson to investigate a possible expansion of the facilities. After extensive planning for a new facility, the conceptual plans were approved on July 14, 1971 and the Planning Committee received the title of Building Committee, again, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Carlson. Implied in this decision was the choice to remain in the inner city. Societal behavior had degenerated in the 1960's and its effect was more pronounced in the City. The economic climate was depressing, lawlessness was on the rise and going out at night was a concern for some people, particularly those in advanced years. Many Norwegian-Americans were abandoning the City, so the decision to remain was not insignificant. It was a decision that signified a desire to continue to provide care to all peoples worthy of our Christian faith and national heritage.

1971 groundbreaking ceremony



A contract was entered into with the Austin Company under a design/build arrangement. The cost for this undertaking was an astounding \$3 million. At a groundbreaking ceremony, which was held on September 26, 1971, three former Presidents were present to ceremoniously excavate the first shovels of soil. They were: Mr. John Olsen, who had been earlier honored with the title of Director Emeritus, Mr. Hjalmar Wartdal and Mr. Erik M. Eriksen, now Honorary President.

Construction commenced on this new 122-bed facility but completion was delayed due to extensive rainy weather and strikes by construction workers. Eventually these obstacles were overcome, and on June 24, 1973, the building was dedicated to the Lord. Mr. Oscar Bakke, Eastern Regional Director of the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration was the guest speaker. Also the Honorable Egil Nygaard, General Consul of Norway in New York gave his personal greetings.

Besides this building milestone, the year 1973 marked the 70th Anniversary of the Home. To celebrate this occasion, a gala event was held in the Great Hall of Our Savior's Lutheran Church located at 80th Street and 4th Avenue, with a

packed audience of over 500 people. George Beverly Shea of the Billy Graham Association was the featured soloist and Rev. Lynn Detweiller the keynote speaker. Mr. Donald Landaas, the accomplished accordionist provided additional music.



It wasn't long after this brand new facility was dedicated that further expansion was discussed. In fact, the booklet prepared for the 70th Anniversary celebration featured the new building and showed an artist's rendering of a future expansion. Penned below this photo were these words:

*"The building that until now has housed our skilled nursing care and health care sections will now be used for residential care only. Even so, the building does not meet the New York State requirements and must eventually be replaced. We do not know how soon."*

Little did we know that it would be another 30 years before the next major expansion would be completed. The idea did not lay dormant, but it was known that the next project would entail the expenditure of multimillions of dollars and would require the demolition of the older buildings which were now used to house the well elderly.



In spite of the concerns in planning, thinking, dreaming and praying for the new facility, activities within the Home not only continued, but even accelerated. It was on October 8, 1975 that His Majesty King Olav V visited the

Home again. Although it was not a long visit, it gave the King an opportunity to view the new facility and to greet the elderly residents. This would be the last visit by King Olav V. On January 17, 1991, his son, Crown Prince Harald succeeded King Olav V.

The 1970's were difficult financial times for New York City. The situation was the end result of social experiments that failed. It affected the Home that was being reimbursed by the government for the care of some elderly. We were now being told that there is an austerity budget in effect and rates will be cut. Fortunately, it was always the aim of the



Directors and staff to keep costs down and quality of care up. And so, with this economic climate, it was not prudent to pursue expansion plans.

Notwithstanding the economic climate, the year 1976 was a year in which we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the birth of our nation with gala events. At the Home, this was tempered with the passing of two "elder statesmen" who had now been residents at the Home for several years. Erik M. Eriksen and John Olsen were both ushered into their eternal home in the same year.



These events seemed to say that there needed to be a new generation to meet new challenges of the day. Although the problems would change, the sacrifice and the desire to minister and serve would remain the same. The State was getting more and more involved in governing the affairs of the healthcare industry. Regulations

were placing a burden on operating the Home in our traditional Christian manner. In spite of this difficulty, Rev. Brattlie was determined not to concede to the pressures placed upon the Home by regulations, but instead "to remain a witness to what a difference Christian love makes, even in social matters." The Home was unique and it was intended to remain that way. We would not conform to the institutional environment being imposed by the bureaucrats. The climate in our country was not conducive to expansion.

Rev. Brattlie was quoted in late 1977: "We hoped that by now the Norwegian Christian Home would have new facilities being built to house more people and to provide clinics and activities opportunities for non-residents. The State and City crises have kept us from funding what we planned."



Although the future was uncertain, the past continued to be celebrated. The year 1978 marked the 75th anniversary of the Home and it was celebrated on March 31st with over 500 people in attendance at a local catering hall. The Consul General of Norway, George Knapp Thestrup expressed admiration for the great work being done in Brooklyn. Not forgotten by the Royal Family, he also read a letter from His Majesty King Olav V. The main speaker, however, was the well-known Norwegian-American, Mr. Oscar Bakke.

The Home accumulated property through estates, gifts and purchases. There was a ministry located at 52nd Street and 7th Avenue dedicated to help Norwegian alcoholics. A man named Andy Christiansen, befriended by Rev. Per Larsen, administered it. After a time away from Brooklyn, Pastor Larsen returned to find that the Blue Cross Association, as it was named, was no longer functioning as intended. Andy was up in years and there was no Board of Directors to act as trustees for this charitable organization. There was concern about the transfer of ownership of the building and assets, so a Board was organized from members of the Norwegian-speaking churches.

At one of its meetings it was considered prudent to dispose of the property and by unanimous vote it was transferred to the Home. The Home, having no need for this property admitted Andy Christiansen as a resident, sold the building and in January 1975 purchased a building at the Tuscarora Conference Center in



Mount Bethel, Pennsylvania, known as the Bethany House. This purchase assisted Tuscarora with its cash flow, since it was in the birthing process, and provided a place for residents of the Home to spend some time in a rural setting.

The need for additional accommodations continued to increase in the 1970's and 1980's. A Planning Committee reported from time to time on an expansion that could house as many as 400 guests. However, borrowing money was very costly as interest rates increased dramatically. Also, the State had infringed even more on the operation of nursing homes since they reimburse the homes for the care of non self-paying residents. In addition to these drawbacks, a request to build was rejected by the New York State Hospital Council.

This did not deter the planning for expanded facilities, however. A number of contractors were invited to get involved in the planning process. As part of this process, adjoining properties were purchased on both 67th Street and Ovington Avenue throughout the 1980's and 1990's.

Starting in 1990, the Planning Committee expanded their horizons and began to evaluate the possibility of establishing the Home in either Montvale, New Jersey or in Mount Bethel, Pennsylvania, adjacent to the Tuscarora Conference Center. After some detailed conceptual plans, land use evaluations and cost estimates, the efforts were abandoned in favor of remaining in Brooklyn and acquiring as much adjacent property as feasible.

In 1994 a major change in leadership of the Home took place. Rev. Samuel Brattlie retired at the end of 1993 after 25 years of service. A 90th Anniversary Banquet was combined with a retirement ceremony for Samuel and Olga Brattlie on October 1, 1993. It was attended by almost 500 people at a catering hall on Staten Island. Chairman O. Magnus Thompson presented a tribute, along with gifts of a Caribbean cruise and a monogrammed silver tray to the Brattlie's. Also, at the end of 1993, O. Magnus Thompson announced that he would not be available for reelection as Chairman. Vice Chairman, John L. Carlson, a long time Board member and Chairman of numerous committees in the past, was elected Chairman of the Board in January 1994.



Rev. & Mrs. Samuel Brattlie

John L. Carlson, who had been Chairman of the Building Committee for the 1973 complex, pursued expansion plans by submitting a proposal to the New York State Office of Housing and Adult Services in accordance with the Certificate of Need approval process. Of the 35 applicants, the Home was one of only eight (8) that was approved and the Home was so notified on October 1, 1996.



Mr. & Mrs. George & Anne Jensen

George A. Jensen succeeded John L. Carlson as Chairman in January 1996, who elected not to be a candidate for personal reasons. John's two year term proved very fruitful in the expansion plans. With the approval in hand, it was incumbent upon the Board to pursue the project in earnest, since the State imposed a mandatory progress schedule. The State had by this time changed the categories of care of the elderly to Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living Care. Since new rules applied for an Assisted Living Facility, it was necessary for the Home to apply for an Assisted Living license.

It became necessary to form several committees and retain consultants to assist in this big new undertaking.

Upon the recommendation of one of the consultants, Kinnally, John & Associates, the Board, on July 21, 1997, approved a proposal to resubmit a Certificate of Need application for the construction of a new Skilled Nursing Facility rather than an Assisted Living Facility. Included in this request was the conversion of the 1973 building to an Assisted Living Facility and Adult Home

and possibly an Adult Day Care Center. At the same time, the Building Committee, under the Chairmanship of John L. Carlson, was seeking an architectural firm to design the new facilities. On April 12, 1999, the Board selected the firm of Breger Terjesen Associates to be the Architect of Record for the project. Almost concurrently, on April 15, 1999, final approval of the Certificate of Need was granted.

It was obvious that the Home needed a full time representative to act on the Home's behalf. A friend of the Home, former Board member, former Assistant Executive Director, who had a wealth of experience in the planning and building industry, John Andersen, felt led to relocate from Florida to New York in July 1999 to direct the project. In retrospect, retaining him as the Project Director was only one of the many situations in the project where Divine guidance was evident. The project was now gathering speed.

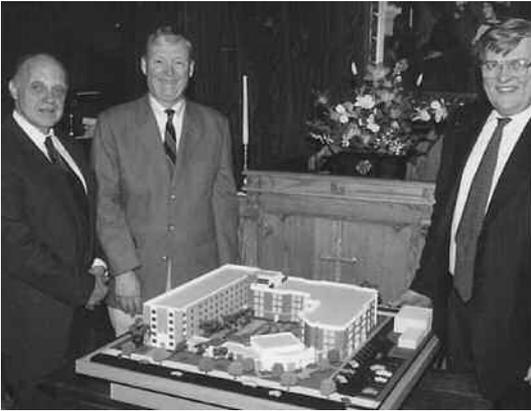
With the retention of an architect, it was necessary to secure financing and a contractor. In evaluating the various sources of funds for this approximately \$32 million project, it became obvious that the only feasible approach was to apply for a tax-free loan through the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York. This loan would be guaranteed by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. While a very favorable interest rate was offered, its approval had to proceed through a very bureaucratic process. A loan of \$27,720,000 was finally approved in August 2001.

In the meantime, discussions were held with several contractors that resulted in the selection of E. W. Howell of Woodbury, Long Island at an upset contract price of \$21,967,500.



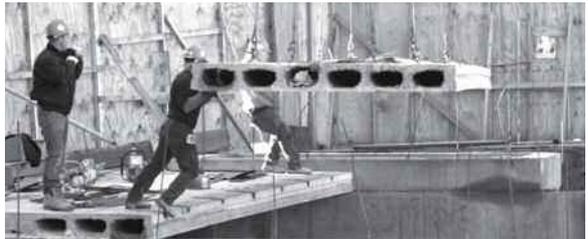
A Groundbreaking Ceremony took place on a wet, wintry afternoon on February 25, 2001. The dining room was filled to capacity. New York City Councilman Marty Golden conveyed greetings as well as State Senator Vincent Gentile and Consul General Atle Leikvoll. Rev. Ivar Overgaard, Senior Pastor of the Salem Evangelical Free Church in Staten Island presented the main address. Excitement

filled the air in anticipation of the erection of a beautiful new building that was portrayed with a table-top model of the site.



Four months later it was time to lay the cornerstone. Besides the date, discussions took place regarding the inscription to be engraved on the cornerstone. A suggestion was made that the admonition found in Exodus 20:12 would be most fitting and appropriate. "Honor thy father and thy mother..."

The Board unanimously approved this suggestion and it was the theme of Dr. Paul Qualben's address at the Cornerstone Laying Ceremony held on a sunny afternoon on June 9, 2002. The unfinished new auditorium was the location of the ceremony. Dr. Qualben, in addition to serving the Home as a psychiatrist, was a member of the Board of Directors. The local elected officials, NYC Councilman Marty Golden, State Assemblyman Peter J. Abbate, Jr. and State Senator Vincent Gentile, who were all very supportive throughout the entire project, gave greetings.



While the construction was taking place, it was recognized that the year 2003 would mark the 100th Anniversary of the Home. The Norwegian Royal Family's interest in the Home throughout its history prompted the Chairman, George A. Jensen, to invite King Harald V to celebrate this occasion. His schedule did not permit this but he did offer to visit at the end of 2002. The construction would be sufficiently advanced so that the King's visit would be combined with a tour of the new facilities. On October 14, 2002 both King Harald V and Queen Sonja spent an afternoon at the Home. After a ceremony in the dining room, where the King recognized the

untiring dedication of Chairman Emeritus O. Magnus Thompson to the Home, the Royal Couple greeted some of the residents and were given a tour of the unoccupied new building. Their comments about the appearance left no doubt about their extreme pleasure and approval.

The completion and occupancy of the new Skilled Nursing Facility was near at hand. The following month, on November 24, 2002, a dedication service took place in the beautiful new auditorium. It was an overflow crowd that joined in this celebration to exalt the Lord for the great things He has done. The crowd was favored with musical selections by various artists. The dedication address was delivered by Rev. W. Richard (Brooke) Solberg, a Brooklyn born minister in the Evangelical Free Church. The symbolic presentation of the key to the new building was given by the Board's Vice Chairman, Frank Govertsen to the Executive Director, Michael Doherty.



The Chairman, George A. Jensen, dedicated the building with these words: "It is right and proper that this Home, which has been erected in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, should be formally and devoutly set apart. For such a dedication we have assembled. Since the dedication of this Home is in vain without the solemn consecration of those whose gifts and labors it represents, let us now give ourselves anew to the service of God: our souls, that they may be renewed after the image of Christ; our bodies, that they may be fit temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and our labors, that they may be according to God's holy will. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we dedicate this Home as a place for the holy ministry of preaching, serving, loving and caring. Amen. So be it."



George Jensen introduces King Harald V to Chairman Emeritus O. Magnus Thompson as his son Arthur and wife Karen look on.

Following occupancy of the new Skilled Nursing Facility which contains 135 beds plus two respite beds, it was time to renovate and convert the 1973 building into an Assisted Living Facility for 88 residents and an Adult Home, located on the 4th and 5th floors. Residents moved into these new accommodations in mid - September 2003.

Throughout its history, the backbone of the Home has been its General Society. Immediately after the Home's founding, the Hansons recognized the need for a supporting organization. It has been the General Society that has provided the volunteer labor and support for the Home. While the function of the General Society has been modified through the years, it continues to assist with special functions, elects the Board of Directors, decides on changes to the constitution and provides spiritual and financial support. The Norwegian Christian Home and Health Center shall forever be indebted to the women and men of the General Society who worked unselfishly for the benefit of the Home

throughout its history, and continue to do so.

Auxiliary societies were formed through the years, which served various needs that benefited the Home and its residents. These were the Ladies Sewing Society, the Dorcus Society and the Forget-Me-Not-Society. At times the membership numbered close to 200 members in each. The men had a counterpart group known as The Society Sunray, which was organized in 1912. The financial well-being of the Home was very dependent upon these societies. Their support was very much appreciated.

The labor of volunteers has been, and continues to be an integral part of the Home's strength. It did not only include the organized societies. Many doctors and dentists, many of whom had a Norwegian heritage, have donated professional medical care. There has been much pro-bono legal work provided. In the years before his retirement, long-term Board member John L. Carlson, Esq. provided legal services at no cost to the Home. How fortunate the Home has been to receive these professional services!

On September 27, 2003, a 100th anniversary celebration was held in the new Arthur Nilsen Banquet Hall, so designated because of a generous donation by Arthur Nilsen's widow in his memory. It was an evening of celebrating God's favor on the Home throughout its 100 year history. The room was filled to capacity. The keynote speaker was Bishop E. Harold Jansen who was born and raised in Brooklyn and attended Trinity Lutheran Church located on 46th Street and 4th Avenue. Along with political leaders and other dignitaries sharing their congratulatory remarks, we were favored with beautiful music by Glenn Eriksen and Marjie Brake.

The Home quickly became the envy of similar institutions. With its elegant décor and the beautiful inviting courtyard garden, comments such as "This looks like a hotel" were frequently heard. However, although the appearance of the facility and the compassionate service provided by the caring staff was exemplary, it did not pay



the bills, including the mortgage which totaled approximately \$233,000 per month. The projections for ramping up the occupancy in the Skilled Nursing Facility, Assisted Living Program and the Independent Living Facility did not materialize, and the operation suffered material financial losses. During the planning stages, an area of approximately 2,500 square feet was set aside for an Adult Day Care Center with its own separate entrance on Ovington Avenue. Although the State placed a moratorium on the approval of Adult Day



Care Centers in the State, we were led to believe that the moratorium would not affect the Home since it was declared during the construction. This turned out not to be the case and the Home was left with an area which did not produce any income. After several years of contemplation and discussion regarding partnering with another institution to provide outpatient

therapy, the Home applied for and received a licensure certificate to operate its own Outpatient Rehabilitation Therapy Department.

In the months following the completion of the new facility, the finances weighed heavily on the Board and the Executive Director at the time, Michael Doherty.



#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2003**

**Seated** (Left to Right) Michael Doherty (Executive Director), A. Frank Govertsen (Vice Chairman), O. Magnus Thompson (Chairman Emeritus), George A. Jensen (Chairman), Marion Fauske (Secretary)

**Second Row Standing** (Left to Right) Arthur Thompson, Thor Holvik, Stanley Ramsdal (Assistant Secretary), Ivar Askeland, Sigurd Olsen (Assistant Treasurer), Eleanor Sollie, Otto Morch (Treasurer), Roy Swensen, Anstein Tjornhom, Richard C. Thompson, Jr.

**Third Row Standing** (Left to Right) John L. Carlson, Donald Lafayette, Ralph Aavik, Dr. Paul Qualben

Many times, residents' skill levels, capabilities and care were not properly recorded and in turn, the Home suffered due to lower reimbursement rates than needed. At one point in 2004, our cash reserves were so low that it was feared that financial obligations could not be met. The possibility of defaulting on the mortgage also became cause for grave concern. At great expense, a line of credit was negotiated with our banking institution.



Redecorated 4th floor resident's room, showing donation through the Home's current TV memorial campaign.

The Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, from whom the mortgage was obtained, became quite concerned as well about the Home's financial condition, and periodic meetings were held with senior staff to evaluate our ability to continue in operation. But God, in His faithfulness, interceded and it was never necessary to exercise the option to borrow from this line of credit to survive.

**A** course of action was developed to improve our reimbursement. The Home became more selective in its admission policy, but a more dramatic change was to concentrate on admitting more short term rehabilitation residents. These are individuals who have suffered physical setbacks such as a stroke, bone fracture, joint replacement, etc. and require therapy to return to independent living. Reimbursements for these services are generally paid by Medicare or health insurance firms and generate a high reimbursement rate. Perseverance



Another 4th floor room with new TV.

produced positive results, but not before our Executive Director, Michael Doherty, resigned to accept a position in a different field. This led to great anxiety since the Home did not have another licensed Health Care Administrator on staff. The Board of Health requirements limit the time that an institution can operate without

a licensed Administrator. During this period it was necessary for the Chairman, George A. Jensen, to oversee the operation of the Home while Mike Doherty was gracious enough to satisfy the Board of Health's requirement by providing the minimum presence at the Home in the evening during this interim period.

While the Home was struggling with its reimbursement, it became obvious that donations needed to be a focus of the Board's attention. The Home's reserves were depleted when the construction of the new facility was undertaken. It seemed prudent to establish a subsidiary corporation, responsible for raising funds to support the interests of the Home. Hence, the Norwegian Christian Home Foundation received its Certificate of Incorporation on January 19, 2006. A separate Board of Directors was established to fulfill its charter. One of its undertakings was the conducting of an auction which was held for the first time in the spring of 2005. The event was to augment the Fall Fair which had been a long time tradition. The auction raised over \$11,000 and was very popular, as witnessed by the 220 people who were in attendance.

An event took place in 2005 which reflected the signs of the times when staff elected to affiliate with the Health Care Workers union. There was an influx of new staff to accommodate our expanded facilities, who, unlike the past, had no prior knowledge or experience with the ministry of the Home. The Board viewed



the action with great disappointment since it always prided itself on their consideration for the welfare of the staff while recognizing the financial stability of the Home. Nevertheless, although the staff spoke, management established a very cordial working relationship with Local 1199. A new era had begun!

The Home was steeped in union negotiations at the same time that it was struggling with its financial situation when Michael Doherty announced his resignation as Executive Director in April 2006. A Search Committee was formed whose task it was to find a Licensed Health Care Administrator who satisfied the Constitutional requirements. In the interim, John Andersen was again called upon to assist the Home in its operations. John, who was the Project Director for the expansion of the Home, assumed the role of Interim Executive Director in May 2006. At the same time, the Board recognized a need to determine the operational procedures that needed to be corrected to improve its reimbursements.

The Board conducted interviews with consultants and selected Mr. Earnest K. Ragin, President of Health Care Professionals, to prepare a report with recommendations. Upon presentation of the recommendations, Mr. Ragin was asked if he was available to be the Licensed Administrator of the Home for a period of six months, commencing on July 2006, to implement his recommendations. After a transition period, John returned to his home in Florida in October 2006, leaving the leadership of the Home to Ernie Ragin.

It did not take a long period of time for the Board to recognize that Mr. Ragin was very knowledgeable in his field and possessed exemplary leadership qualities. Hence it became an easy decision for the Board to retain Mr. Ragin as the Executive Director. Although he is the first non-clergy Administrator, his beliefs, character and moral values uphold the ministry and spiritual emphasis of the Home.

The acquisition of adjacent property to the existing campus has been of prime importance to the Board. Throughout its history, property was purchased even if there was no immediate apparent need at the time. This vision has proved itself extremely valuable in the past and the Board has continued this policy. Such was the case with a house located at 1232 – 67th Street. The structure was a three story wood framed building housing 80+ year old Mr. Frederick Hoehn. A friend of the Home who spent a good amount of his life in this house had promised that when he was ready to vacate, the Home would have the right of first refusal to purchase the property. That time came in mid-2002 when the Board was informed that the 40' x 130' property was for sale at a price of \$600,000. The purchase price was negotiated to \$590,000 and the closing took place on October 22, 2002. Unfortunately, the house itself was a liability and it was demolished in September 2009 to provide much-needed automobile parking. The Home would not have been able to afford to purchase this property except for the fact that it owned a one-family house at 824 - 67th Street. This house was the residence of Steve Meibauer and his family, who had just resigned as Maintenance Director to move upstate in New York. We were able to sell this building for \$400,000, making it possible to purchase the adjacent property.

The Home owned another building located on the grounds of the Tuscarora Inn and Conference Center in Mount Bethel, Pennsylvania. That building, known as the Bethany House, was used as a summer retreat for the residents in the 1970's, '80's and '90's. Its use declined in the latter years due to the unfamiliarity of the new residents with the Tuscarora ministry. The house was purchased on December 27, 1974 to provide cash flow for the Tuscarora venture, as well as providing an enjoyable respite for the well-elderly. Having served its purpose for many years, the Home sold the property back to Tuscarora, which now not only had the means to purchase it, but had an urgent need to provide housing for a staff family. What goes around comes around.

Although the new Skilled Nursing Facility was completed in 2002, it took approximately eight years to satisfy all of the requirements imposed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department which guaranteed the Home's mortgage loan. The official closing of the loan took place at a meeting known as the Final Endorsement on March 22, 2011. During this entire period, monthly mortgage payments were made at an interest rate of



6.09% even though the market rates were gradually declining. As soon as the Final Endorsement took place, the Home decided to refinance and take advantage of the lower rates. Hence, on May 10, 2011 the mortgage was transferred from the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York to Prudential Huntoon Paige Associates, Ltd. at a new rate of 3.75%. This refinancing saved the Home in excess of \$2.1 million over the remaining life of the loan!



A very popular and attractive addition to service the staff, residents, guests and visitors was opened on May 1, 2010. Known as the Heritage Hall Café, it was the brainchild of Mr. Ragin, who has a background as a chef. The Café serves meals, snacks, drinks, ice cream, etc. and has proven to be a very popular attraction, as witnessed by the need to add seating capacity subsequent to its opening. The composition of the Board of Directors changes periodically for various

reasons. There are a certain few whose dedication, loyalty and commitment are so rare that they deserve recognition for their service. One such individual is John L. Carlson, who served on the Board since the mid 1960's. He held the positions of Vice Chairman, Chairman and Chairman of the Building Committees for the construction of the "1973" building as well as the Skilled Nursing Facility. His resignation was accepted by the Board on September 20, 2010 at which time the Board designated him as "Counsel Emeritus".

The other dedicated servant is the late O. Magnus Thompson, who served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for 25 years, and to whom tribute was paid at the 100th Anniversary celebration. The title of "Chairman Emeritus" was conferred on him after his tenure on the Board ended. The NCHHC community was saddened at his passing on August 3, 2011 to meet his Lord and Savior. His legacy remains an inspiration to this day.

In the period following the completion of the Skilled Nursing Facility, the Home experienced some turbulent times. The latter part of the period suffered from a severe economic downturn resulting in decreased reimbursements and contributions. Nevertheless, the Board has seen Divine guidance and answers to prayer. God has proven Himself to be faithful.



To counter this trend, the Board decided to hold its first ever major fund raising event, the likes of which the Home had undoubtedly never experienced. A crowd of over 300, paying \$150 per plate, gathered in the ballroom of the elegant Brooklyn Marriott Hotel to give praise to our Lord Jesus Christ for His faithfulness and to pay tribute to four honorees for their achievements. Times are such that galas such as this are now intended as a source of income. A silent auction contributed to this endeavor in addition to a raffle for a three year lease of a Toyota sedan donated by the local dealership.

- A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented posthumously to O. Magnus Thompson, former Chairman of the Board of Directors, in part for his 25 years of service in that capacity.
- The Community Service Award recognized New York Senator Martin J. Golden. Senator Golden previously served as a City Councilman and because of his popularity in the community has, on occasion, been reelected without an opponent.

- The performing Arts Award went to Sonja E. Dalen, the popular and well-known Norwegian vocalist who has entertained the Norwegian community in New York for many years. She has also appeared on European television and has performed in the presence of Norwegian Royalty.
- Keith Luneburg was the recipient of the Business & Commerce Award. With over 25 years in the healthcare industry he grew his firm, FDR Services Corp., into the largest privately owned laundry firm in the United States.



Torry Berntsen, a NCHHC Board member and President and Chief Operating Officer of the Independent Bank Group, served as the Event Chairman. It was



### 2013 Board of Directors

**Seated:** (Left to Right): Lori Aavik, (Secretary), Earnest K. Ragin, (Executive Director), George A. Jensen, (Chairman), Arlene Rutuelo, (Vice Chairman, Community Relations), Stanley Ramsdal, (Vice Chairman), Eleanor Sollie

**Standing:** (Left to Right): Arthur Goyena, Assistant Treasurer) A. Frank Govertsen, Ivar Askeland, Anstein Tjornhom, Eleanor Bensen, Torry Berntsen, Richard C. Thompson, Jr., George Banat, Edward Johannesen

**Not Shown:** Ralph Aavik, (Treasurer), Rebecca E. Daniel, (Assistant Secretary), Phyllis Holvik, Rev. Dan Reeve, Roy Swensen, John B. Swift, III

his honor to introduce the keynote speaker, the Honorable Geir O. Pedersen, Norway's Ambassador to the United Nations, who related the contributions that ordinary Norwegian immigrants made in the United States.

The year did not pass without the Board considering the future. The mission remains constant but the means of accomplishing the mission changes as needs arise and finances allow. Hence, a Strategic Planning Committee was formed to evaluate future uses of the property, and determine if our current services should be modified so as to be more profitable.

Many meetings and discussions ensued, and although the Board realized that it did not have the expertise to formulate a plan, it would take some months to take concrete action due to a lack of funds to retain assistance. While the funds were not available to retain a consultant, credit was given to the Executive Director and the Controller for managing the finances and maintaining the Home as financially viable.

While finances consumed much of the energy of staff and the Board, it also became clear that the policy-making entity of the Home, namely the Board, needed members who had expertise in professions that would be of value to the Home. Consequently a change in the Constitution was approved to allow the General Society to admit to membership on the Board of Directors up to three individuals who do not meet the stated qualifications, but have special skills and are deemed to be beneficial to the operation of the Board. This decision was made with much prayerful thought and trepidation, but precautions and safeguards were included to assure that the mission would not be compromised. As this period in the Home's history comes to a close, no such individual has been elected.



### 2017 Board

**Front row:** Rev. Paul Knudsen, Lori Aavik (Secretary), George A. Jensen (Chairman), Rebecca E. Daniel (Assistant Secretary), Arnold T. Oftedal  
**Back row:** Bill Dietrich, Ralph Aavik (Treasurer), Stanley Ramsdal, Earnest K. Ragin (Executive Director), Arlene Rutuelo (Vice Chairman), Arthur J. Goyena (Assistant Treasurer), Edward Johannesen  
**Missing:** Eleanor Bensen, Torry Berntsen, Roy Swensen, Richard C. Thompson, Jr.

Changes in staff are inevitable, but when Rev. Arne Abrahamsen, the Home's long term Chaplain, tendered his resignation there was no question but that he needed to be replaced to retain the spiritual services and ministry for which the Home emphasizes.



In 2017, Rev. William Redekop came forth after prayerful consideration to provide the leadership in ministering to the residents and staff. Because of the changing demographics of the residents and staff, the Board considers this position of vital importance in carrying out its mission of caring for their spiritual welfare. Many now come to the Home having no knowledge of the free gift of salvation offered by our Savior, the Lord Jesus.

The Home was started in 1903 to care for Scandinavian women. This changed in 1912 when men were admitted, but still was predominately Scandinavian. This basically continued until the later part of the 20th century, although there was no restriction for other ethnic groups to avail themselves of its services. It was clear that the demographics of the community was changing. Immigration from northern Europe was restricted in the 1960's and the results became very apparent in the latter part of the 20th century. As the early stages of the 21st century emerged, another characteristic of the community surfaced that was not envisioned when the Skilled Nursing Facility was developed. Immigrants from China and Hong Kong created a large Chinese community at the Home's doorsteps. The Board, in its desire to minister to this group who has special needs, formed a Chinese Outreach Committee to develop a strategy in how to attract the Chinese, so that the Home will be their place of choice when the need arises. The effort continues as this period of the Home's history comes to an end.

In 2017, the Board decided to borrow funds to retain the services of the consulting firm, Greystone, headquartered in Texas, to advise on a strategy to maximize the property and services. Included in the study would be a recommendation on the use of the contiguous property on 67th Street which



was being used as an “overflow parking lot”. Also prompting this study was the fact that the Independent Living area and the Assisted Living Program were underutilized. Four programs were recommended and committees were formed to address and investigate the details for implementing each strategy.

It has been approximately 15 years since the Skilled Nursing Facility was dedicated. While the facility received comparisons to a first class hotel, time was taking its toll and upgrades became necessary. Fortunately a reserve fund was established by our mortgagor which enabled replacement of floors, installation of a new call bell system and new furniture. Complementing these improvements was a campaign to raise funds to install state-of-the-art televisions in each of the 4th floor residents rooms in the Skilled Nursing Facility.



Early in 2018, Mr. Ragin announced his intention to retire by the end of the year. It was an announcement that the Board reluctantly anticipated. Finding a replacement for Mr. Ragin was a task that the Board viewed as laborious, difficult and very time consuming. But, in His Divine providence God brought to our attention an experienced Licensed Administrator who was currently seeking a new position. After an initial interview with the first candidate, the Board unanimously agreed to offer him a position. The Board had been open for some time to hire an assistant so that Mr. Ragin could provide some training before he retired. This candidate did not require any training because of his extensive experience, so arrangements were made so that a transition period would provide a smooth change in leadership. With much relief and pleasure, the Board welcomed Mr. Anthony Restaino to assume leadership of the Home as its Executive Director on January 1, 2019.