

The remarkable life of Dr. Olaf Th Sherping (Skjerping) from Torpo in Hallingdal *by Olav Sataaslaatten*

The story of doctor Olaf Th Sherping is one of remarkable achievements. Very few if any of the immigrants to America from the valley of Hallingdal during that period reached such a level of accomplishments. Several immigrants from Norway became doctors in their new country, but the majority of them were already practising medicine in Norway before they emigrated. That's not the case with Olaf. He not only became a doctor, he became one of the well known and respected surgeons in that part of the States.

At the age of 34 he became a mayor. He built the first hospitals of two towns, as well as serving as President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of two banks. In addition, he became the first chairman of The Hallinglag of America, holding that position for five years.



Olaf Th. Sherping was born in Hallingdal, Norway, on August 6. 1864. He was the son of Thorstein and Margaret (Opheim) Skjerping. Olaf Th. Sherping received his early educational training in the schools of Hallingdal and Oslo, and was graduated from the Latin school at Christiania.

Few from Hallingdal graduated from that school during that period, so it's obvious that his parents not only were of some means, but also had the vision and the aim of providing him and his brother Eirik, who later became a priest and a doctor in America, with a solid fundament.

After leaving school, he immigrated to America together with his brother Eirik on the steam ship Angelo 2. May 1884, landing in New York city on May 20, 1884.

Olaf went to Wittenberg Normal School in Ohio and Valparaiso Normal School in Indiana. He came to Canton, South Dakota, where he remained for three years, and in 1888 went to Green Hay, Wisconsin, where he studied medicine in the office of Dr. U. F. M. Poppe for two years.

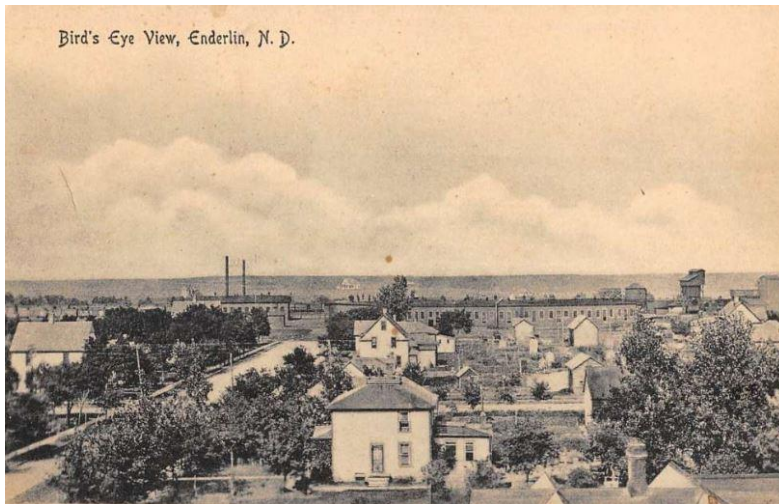
Upon finishing his preliminary study, he entered the medical department of Keokuk College, at Keokuk, Iowa, and was graduated with the class of 1894. Since that time he took post-graduate work at Chicago, New York, Vienna, and London. He was surgeon at the «Soo" Railway Co. in the period 1894- 1902.



Keokuk Medical College
Keokuk, Iowa

Doctor Sherping located at Enderlin, North Dakota, where he pursued the active practice of his profession until 1902. Dr. Olaf Sherping built the first hospital, which was combined with his residence on the site of the present Trinity Lutheran Church parking lot.

During the years from 1891 to 1897, Enderlin was under the government of Liberty Township. In 1898, the city of Enderlin was established with Olaf as mayor.



Sherping was married in 1895 to the Norwegian May M. Sollin, the daughter of C. A. Sollin, and they had the son, Ralph Victor, who was a graduate of St. John's Military Academy at Delafield, Wisconsin. Ralph Victor pursued a career in banking in Wabash, Indiana.



Olaf Sherping was appointed Medical Director and acting surgeon of St. Luke's Hospital in Fergus Falls in March 1903, parallel to the building of the hospital. In April 1903 he donated \$1000 to its establishment, which adds up to \$ 29,000 in today's value.

Dr. Sherping and his wife moved to their new home, «Thorpe» at Swan Lake, Dane Prairie township, about eight miles from Fergus Falls in the autumn of 1912. The newspaper noted that

Mrs Sherping went to the big cities to buy furniture. According to the paper, Dr Sherping planned to spend from 5 to 7000 dollars on the estate, equivalent to \$203,000 in today's value.



At one occasion, Dr Sherping invited the Norwegian-Danish Press Association to his estate, and apart from

being served «fløyelsgrøt» and several other Norwegian dishes, they were astonished by the beauty and excellence of the estate itself. Sherping was a man of considerable means, being able to embark on a three month's holiday to several European countries with his wife and son in the summer of 1909.



Sherping in the middle of this picture taken in Oslo during a visit of Norse-Americans to Norway in 1914.

Olaf Sherping was the first chairman of Hallinglaget of America, and he held that position for five years. He paid the issuing of their first journal, Hallingminne, from his own pocket. He must have gone back on visits to Torpo several times, as it's mentioned that he loved fishing in the river Lya there. He is shown on a photo from Oslo in 1914, when a large contingent of Norse-Americans visited Norway.

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Dr Sherping was appointed Vice-president of The Minnesota State Medical Association in 1911. He was president of the Scandia State Bank as well as chairman of the Board of Directors

of the American State Bank of Fergus Falls. A keen skier, he also established the Park Region Ski Club.



Dr Sherping in the middle with some staff members at St Luke's

Prämie Skirend.

Park Region Ski Club

vil afholde Præmierend

den 9de Februar 1917

Dette bliver et internationalt Rend og vil indbefatte alle professionelle Skiløbere fra National Skiløberforeningen deriblandt ogsaa Ragnar Omtvedt, som holder Verdensrekorden med 197 Fod, vil deltage.

Det er to Aar siden Fergus Falls har havt internationalt Rend og Bakken er forlænget og Hoppet høiere end nogen- sinde før. Lange og interessante Hop vil derfor kunne præsteres. Over tre hundrede Dollars vil blive uddelte i Præmier. Løbene vil begynde præcis Klokken halv to, saa Tilskuerne kan overvære det hele og alligevel komme i god betids til Eftermiddagstogene eller Kveldsstellet.

Dr Olaf Th Sherping was widely known and recognized in medical circles throughout that section of the country.

In the Fergus Falls Ugeblad, his name is mentioned extensively through decades, not only for his skills as a surgeon, but also through his wide range of philanthropic contributions.

He passed away in his home at Swan Lake in 1929, 64 years old.



Sources:

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