100 years of
Aase Haugen Senior Services
from Haugendale to Nordic Drive  1915-2015

Aase Haugen
Senior Services
A History of Family
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Aase Haugen Senior Services humbly dedicates this booklet to the countless number of people over the past 100 years who have supported Aase Haugen Homes and Aase Haugen Senior Services along the way in so many different roles.

We appreciate the guidance, leadership and support of our Corporate Member Congregations; the board members, the delegates, WELCA’s, women’s circles and volunteers.

We are deeply grateful to each and every member of the community who has taken the time to support our mission through donations of volunteer time, skill, in kind gifts and monetary support.

We are proud of our dedicated staff who have provided compassion, comfort, healing and hope to the residents we serve 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for the past 100 years.

Without the support, encouragement and tireless efforts of all of these contributors, Aase Haugen’s vision of a home for the elderly would not be realized today. Without the vision, determination and faith in our ministry, Aase Haugen Senior Services would not be planning to serve the next generations of people in our community.

Thank you!

A special thank you to all the members of the Aase Haugen Centennial Committee for their years of planning, creating, coordinating and decisions. Your guidance and contributions to this celebration have been invaluable.

A special thank you to Bob Felde for assistance with this historical narrative.
From Haugendale to Nordic Drive

Haugendale? The original Aase Haugen Home for the Aged was located: “three and a half miles southwest of Decorah on the Decorah branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad. It is situated on a knoll beside a creek, on the other side of which is a densely wooded, somewhat semi-circular bluff that in summer presents a resplendent view of various shades of green and in autumn is a gorgeous mass of variegated colors of exquisite beauty.

On the knoll immediately in front of the building, is a well kept lawn and two flagstaffs and some flower beds and evergreens. At the rear of the building is a very large triangular flower bed containing 166 named varieties of iris, 2800 tulips, something over 200 gladiolus, and a great variety of summer flowers.

In addition, there are evergreens and other ornamental trees and shrubs. Beyond there to the west and the north is the 620 acre farm that belongs to the Home and provides significant financial income for the Home besides all that the Home needs of farm produce, such as meat, milk, butter, eggs, and vegetables.

In an earlier day, traffic between the Home and Decorah was by railroad train. Now it is chiefly by automobiles over paved state highway No. 9 and a short crushed-rock side-road, which passes through the Home farm.”

25th Anniversary booklet
Yes, this was the idyllic setting of "Haugendale," a name primarily associated with the train stop that served to link Decorah and the Aase Haugen Home. In fact, the design of the Home provided that the front entrance face the train stop.

But the association of Haugendale with Aase Haugen Home was short lived. With the demise of rail transit, the practical entrance to the Home gradually shifted to the back of the building, and even in the Home's 25th Anniversary booklet the name "Haugendale" is notably absent.

But the real story is that of Haugendale's namesake, Aase Haugen.

Aase Haugen, at age 13, was one of five children of Bjorn and Ingeborg Haugen, wealthy Norwegian immigrants who came to the United States in 1854. Their fourteen week sailship journey from Eggedal, Norway, pictured left, eventually took them to the Erie Canal, the Great Lakes, and on to Milwaukee; the journey then involved an arduous ox-cart trip that ended in Lansing, Iowa. Aase's mother, Ingeborg, fell ill with cholera and died before relatives from the Decorah area could arrive.

Bjorn continued on with his children and purchased land in Madison Township, Winneshiek County. As the oldest child, Aase took over the duties of her late mother, caring for her father and her siblings. For 25 years the family is reported to have lived a "quiet, frugal, and industrious life" that included a strong participation in Decorah Lutheran Church.
from its founding date in 1863. But then, in a short period of time from 1879 to 1884, three of Aase’s siblings died. Her father died in 1890, and Aase’s last sibling and younger sister, Jorand, died in 1893. Aase had been there for each of them in their time of need, their caretaker at the end.

At one point Aase was engaged, but delayed the marriage due to her father’s objections. Before any reconciliation could be made, her fiancé died; she is reported to have taken the engagement ring to her grave.

At age 42, Aase was alone and referred to much of her life following these losses as "dark and dreary." She questioned why all this had happened to her, but remained firm in her faith. "All my family has been taken from me. Here I am with more wealth than I can ever use. But the Lord will show me the way." She became generous with her resources including contributions to children’s homes, seminary students and a multitude of church activities - including a gift of $1,650 for a pipe organ at Decorah Lutheran Church.

In her mid sixties, Aase was diagnosed with cancer. She sought counsel from her pastor, Reverend Otto E. Schmidt, related to her medical and spiritual care. When she recognized the illness to be terminal, she made her will. Given the life experiences that resulted in her years alone, and seeing a particular need in society that paralleled her own experiences, it is not surprising that she gave her entire farm to the Church, specifically to provide a home for the aged in her name. She died in 1910 at the age of 69.

Cousins contested the will, stating Aase was not in her right mind when she made it. They thought it too extravagant to give the entire farm away to the Norwegian Lutheran Church. Lucky for all of us, they lost their contest in court.

The Spirit of Aase Haugen. "After more than half a century the spirit of Aase Haugen goes on in the old Home and reaches out to all of that which came as a result of her love and concern. The silent testimony from the more than 100 graves on the hillside across the creek from the Home together with numerous others who are resting in other cemeteries breaks through the stillness to say of Aase Haugen - 'God bless you.'" Administrator Virgil Hougen, 1965, celebrating 50th Anniversary
home on the Aase Haugen farm. Construction began in 1914, and was completed in 1915. Schmidt was also elected as permanent manager of the Aase Haugen Home for the Aged in 1915.

The three story building, 96 x 57 feet, with full basement, included two dining rooms, laundry, two pantries, office, chapel, parlors, a smoking room and more. Fully furnished rooms and all the daily living essentials were provided to residents in a structured Christian environment. Residents were expected to work within the Home and farm to the best of their abilities. With a capacity of 50 residents, the average number of occupants through the first 25 years was about 45.

Admission to the Home required that an applicant be at least 65, of good moral character, free of infectious disease or impairing disability, and willing to contribute to their own support to the greatest extent possible.

Applications came pouring in, even from neighboring states. Each application included a physician’s affidavit of fitness, ensuring residents were free of disease, and references as to the applicant’s moral character.

Although nursing staff were present, the intent was not to be a nursing facility. All baking was done in house, and virtually all the food came from the farm and

Applications.

Upon acceptance into the Aase Haugen Family, they were given room and board for the rest of their lives in addition to an eternal resting place in the Aase Haugen Cemetery. Aase Haugen Homes continued as a solely Lutheran-based social ministry, through the merger of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1917.

WWII Era. “The generous donations to the Home are an immense help. Only last week I received a letter from the Highland Ladies Aid Society, saying that if I would bring up 75 mason jars, they would fill them for the Home...You ladies of the Women’s Missionary Federation know what it means to have a good supply of canned fruits, vegetables, and meats stored up for future use.......All baking is done at the Home; 16 loaves of bread, the big kind that mother used to bake every other day. The sugar rationing has caused some inconveniences, but if it will help win the war we will eat cakes without frosting and cookies that need little sweetening.”

Rev. Otto Schmidt, circa 1942

Pictured left, residents from 1958 work together to make the Christmas lefse, a tradition almost as old as Aase Haugen Home that is observed to this day thanks to the help of dedicated volunteers and staff!
Pictured right, the immaculate gardens kept at Aase Haugen Home. Many area churches would also donate their excess canned food to the Home as well.

**WWII Era, Cont.**

“The butter would be quite an issue if not for the fact that it is churned at the Home. Three of our men take turns and the job is soon finished. The butter-milk is soon taken care of. It requires 9 pounds of butter per day. Our farm furnishes 180 pounds of whole milk and 1 gallon of cream each day, so there is plenty of good cream for the coffee and churning butter. All our vegetables are grown in the home garden; also the strawberries, ground cherries, goose-berries, currants and some plums.” Rev. Otto Schmidt speech, circa 1942.

**25th Anniversary, 1940.**
The event featured a festival worship with the President of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America preaching, the Decorah Municipal Band, and three Winneshiek County Singing Societies directed by Carlo Sperati. Following a picnic, the afternoon featured greetings from Luther College, St. Olaf College, and multiple church dignitaries.

Schmidt not only tended to his own family- wife Mollie and three children Waldemar, Orval and Carola pictured above- on the farm, but maintained the organization and operations in any way needed; regularly helping wash and hang clothes and linens on laundry day.

**Transition years.** Reverend Torger Thompson, a Norwegian Immigrant himself, assumed management for 10 years beginning in 1944. His tenure included an emphasis on the farming operations that included both dairy gardens tended by residents and staff alike.

Schmidt managed both the farm and the Home with a deaconess nurse, assistant nurse, cook, two maids, and a janitor. The original farm had been 240 acres, but the farm had accumulated additional land over the years, so by 1940, the property consisted of over 600 acres.

The 50th Anniversary edition of the *Herald* sums up Schmidt's service: “Under trying conditions Pastor Schmidt not only directed the activities of the Home, but managed the farm and often found it necessary to do the farm work and gardening himself. He continued in his position until 1944, almost 30 years.”

Schmidt not only tended to his own family- wife Mollie and three children Waldemar, Orval and Carola pictured above- on the farm, but maintained the organization and operations in any way needed; regularly helping wash and hang clothes and linens on laundry day.

**Farm Stewardship, 1940.** “In order to prevent erosion... Several dams have been constructed and others are under construction. Contour plowing is rigidly observed, as also strict rotation of crops, thus bringing erosion to a minimum. Under the direction of the C.C.C., about 400 tons of limestone have been crushed at the farm quarry and spread over the land. This soil conservation is of inestimable value to the farm. Three wild-life sanctuaries have been established for the protection of birds, and much tree planting has been done. The whole farm is a wildlife refuge, no hunting or trapping on the farm being allowed.”

25th Anniversary booklet
and beef farms, and the employment of two farm families. A new house for the superintendent was built in west Decorah. And although the original Home continued to operate from its traditional background, the aging population of the residents and expanded demand for additional space began an era of change. One of Reverend Thompson’s last actions as superintendent was the first expansion of Aase Haugen services into Calmar.

The Lutheran Sunset Home, Calmar. In 1953 a large home became available in Calmar and given a swelling need for senior housing it was annexed as part of the Aase Haugen Home (below). The “mansion” was filled as soon it was remodeled. It was dedicated in the fall of 1954, and eventually the conversion of a garage into rooms, and was licensed to care for 18 custodial residents.

Changing Health Care Needs. "In simple words - we need an Infirmary! We need it soon. We will need funds. We need the support of every person who is in the least interested about our aged people who stand in need, who lie and wait." Superintendent Virgil Hougen, 1958 newsletter. Note this plea was shortly after the establishment of the 24 bed nursing facility at Haugendale.

Changing times, needs, and regulations. Pastor Virgil Hougen, pictured left, became administrator in 1954. Continuing in the pastoral leadership tradition, Hougen was "called" to the position by the Evangelical Lutheran Church (successor to the United Lutheran Church) and resigned his pastoral role for St. John and Hauge Lutheran Churches.

Farming, Early 1950’s. Times were changing. One of the farm workers at Aase commented that the new administrator was no farmer but made all the decisions, and it made it hard to do the right thing regarding farming. "With 40 cows in the barn and some of them dry, that barn decision was driven by something other than practicality. He told Minneapolis (the church body) there were 40 cows in the barn, and there would be 40 cows in the barn." collected historical notes

Pastor Virgil Hougen received the Pioneer award at the 1986 meeting of the Iowa Association of Homes for the Aging. As one of the founding members and past president of the Association, he was commended for his valuable contributions and ideals that served as guideposts for the generations to follow.
He continued as Aase Haugen Administrator until 1973. That era ushered in significant expanding needs for the nursing care of seniors, accompanied by the proliferation of state rules and regulations that defined, as well as limited, the extent of services that could be offered to any aging population. It soon became evident that the Calmar facility was not in the position to provide the growing need for nursing services, and it was declared a "Custodial Home," that is, a home that provided for the needs of only ambulatory residents not in need of regular nursing care. Residents who developed additional medical needs were offered the option to enter the Infirmary at Aase Haugen Home, or needed to seek nursing home or hospital assistance.

Although the vision of a traditional "retirement home" service had not been lost, that vision would mostly slip away as the demand for nursing services exploded. The beginning of nursing services. Although the original intent was to provide services for the healthy aged, it was inevitable that the aging population of the Home would dictate the need for more nursing services. In 1957 the State Board of Health demanded that a nursing staff be employed. The Home began such services on the third floor of the building, but was determined that it should be primarily serving those residents from within, and not from outside the Home. The 24 bed unit was filled almost immediately, mostly with residents from within, or from Sunset Home.

Psalm 142.
"A Thought To Consider...
Psalm 142: 4,7 - 'No refuge remains for me, no man cares for me... The righteous will surround me; for thou wilt deal bountifully with me." editorial from Herald, 1962, just prior to the opening of the new Retirement Center.

The Changing Face of Gifts - The Call for Cash.
"We depend on donations... that from time to time lift us out of the red. We are thankful to you...Could we make a few suggestions...in most instances we would prefer the funds (instead of special or gifts in kind) - first because we know our specific need better than those outside...and we can most often buy at a discount."

And the need was also dictated by a new Iowa law: "Donations of home-canned or processed foods shall not be accepted." Superintendent Virgil Hougen, 1958 newsletter.

Pictured above are Susie Akre and Anna Bidne, featured in the Dec. 1958 Newsletter as fellow Big Canoe parishioners who would be sharing a room in the new Aase Haugen Home infirmary. "Mrs. Akre is confined to a wheelchair but this does not hinder her from taking part in the activities of the home; she attends chapel regularly and can visit other patients." Dec. 1958 Newsletter

Pictured is Mrs. George Giselson, RN, and assistant Mrs. Edna Blilie. They and 6 other women comprised the staff of the Aase Haugen Home 3rd floor infirmary.
As early as 1958, in the Aase Haugen Home for the Aged/Lutheran Sunset Home newsletter Superintendent Virgil Hougen was noting major inadequacies in the ability to meet the growing medical needs. He noted that 3/4 of applicants to the Home were candidates for nursing care and that the Home was now essentially posting a "No Vacancy" sign. A closer relationship with the medical community was also needed. The "Home is four miles in the country - two miles of which is dusty gravel and in the winter often closed by snow drifts."

1960: Transition from the Evangelical Lutheran Church to Aase Haugen Homes, Inc. - the beginnings of the Decorah Retirement Center. The growing need for nursing services as well as expanded retirement housing drove the research for how to expand. The sentimental attachment to the original site gave way to the practicalities of a less expensive and convenient city location in Decorah.

The minutes of the 1962 Aase Haugen Annual Meeting took care to note that this extensive research, that had begun as early as 1957, and direction came from the operating body at that time - The Board of Charities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, located in Minneapolis. They purchased the property for the Decorah Retirement Center, and then in 1960 transferred all contracts, deeds, and accumulated assets to the newly formed corporation, Aase Haugen Homes, Inc. This
The Aase Haugen Home, two farms, the superintendent’s residence in Decorah, the Sunset Home in Calmar, and the property for the new center. Aase Haugen Homes was still a Lutheran Social Ministry, with local Lutheran churches entrusted with its governance. Revenues from a profitable Aase Haugen Home, as well as proceeds from fund raising efforts (especially from supporting congregations) were directed to the Retirement Center Fund - a primary activity of the two year old corporation. As of March 1, 1962, they had $90,664.35 including cash, value of the land and improvements. In the following campaign, over $277,000 was raised. In the end, they borrowed only $65,000 of the total cost of construction on the estimated $532,000 project.

Decorah Retirement Center opens, 1963. With land, and the money in hand to build, construction on the new facility began and was completed on the 84 bed facility in 1963. Costs were listed as $100 per month for custodial or supportive care, $135 per month for simple nursing care, and $185 per month for infirmary care. Administrator Hougen’s report regarding the first months painted a clear picture of the role the new

Room for all.
Many church and community groups, like the WA-TAN-YE club, came out to spend quality time with residents monthly.
A high vaulted ceiling in the dining room allowed for natural light, and the roomy dining area left considerable space for visitors, groups and volunteers to come and visit, entertain or even celebrate the first anniversary of opening, as seen here.

A Gem of Northeast Iowa. The Decorah Retirement Center was built as the most modern, state-of-the-art nursing facility in this region. Due to its popularity, additions were made in 1968 and again in 1978, when it reached a maximum capacity of 159 residents.

Needs List for the new Decorah Retirement Center, 1963: "records for stereo or Hi-Fi, decorator pillows, subscriptions to good magazines, T.V. tray sets; 20, 30, 50 cup percolators."
The Spirit of Aase Haugen.

"After more than half a century the spirit of Aase Haugen goes on in the old Home and reaches out to all of that which came as a result of her love and concern. The silent testimony from the more than 100 graves on the hillside across the creek from the Home together with numerous others who are resting in other cemeteries breaks through the stillness to say of Aase Haugen - 'God bless you.'" Administrator Virgil Hougen, 1965, celebrating 50th Anniversary

Increasing Nursing Care Services and 50th Anniversary, 1965.

As the Aase Haugen Homes administrator and board of directors looked at the past 50 years of service with gratitude and awe, they saw the industry changing drastically for the future. They hired a social services director, Wayne Paulson, to coordinate and direct the residents' activities, such as handwork, recreation, entertainment and personal visitation. Many of the handwork items—wood baskets, mosaic trivets, doll quilts, pillows and more—were sold to raise funds for more materials, games and entertainment.

Paulson also began a Reverse Adoption program to encourage more one-on-one visitation and interaction for the residents who had no family close by.

Dennis Aten was also contracted as Physical Therapist to the Decorah Retirement Center, to direct the Therapeutic Activities at the Retirement Center. Decorah Retirement Center’s Physical Therapy was the first rehabilitation program

The Aase Haugen Home Cemetery.

Each stone a replica of the simple headstone that rests above Aase Haugen’s head in the Union Prairie Cemetery, surrounded by her family’s monuments.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank and Mathilda Bryant, celebrating 61 years of wedded bliss and life at the Decorah Retirement Center together. 1964 Herald

Life at the Decorah Retirement Center.

There were often a vast range of resident ages and levels of ability or health. This created a yet unknown concern regarding how to keep all residents engaged, active and involved within the wide range of limitations. Many new programs evolved to better serve the residents.

Pictured is Decorah Retirement Center’s Otto Mathisen, who chauffeured President Lincoln’s son, Robert Lincoln, and Vice President Dawes!
outside of the local hospital to address the varied needs and training needed for elders with physical disabilities. In two years of operation, the Decorah Retirement Center had served 170 people, and further expansion was discussed.

Closure of Sunset Home, 1969. Sunset Home was closed in August of 1969. The reason was solely financial. It had been running deficits, in large part due to increased costs, no increase in "Old Age Assistance Grants," and most of the residents being on "Welfare." The building was sold to become a dormitory for men attending Area One Vocational School.

At about the same time, an announcement was made regarding expansion of 14 additional beds at the Decorah Retirement Center that would roughly equal the loss of space in Calmar.

The writing on the wall for Haugendale. A 1969 report that summarized the background of Aase Haugen Homes seemed to be the writing on the wall for the eventual closure of the original building. That report referenced the increasing average age of incoming residents. It was now at 80, instead of 65-70 as it had been in earlier years.

The new Decorah Retirement Center had intended to provide nursing care in one section of the building and retirement in the other. But the demand for nursing care filled the entire building. The inability of the Aase Haugen residents to transfer to the nursing facilities at the Retirement Center pushed the Home to double its nursing staff.

Although some significant remodeling had been done in 1965, the 1969 report began...
to raise many critical questions related to sustaining the status quo of operating Aase Haugen. While noting the tremendous assets of buildings and 600 acres of mortgage free land, the Farm Committee was challenged to ask if the current arrangements were satisfactory and what the future of agricultural support was under the tenant share plan.

The report cited the solid construction of the building and its compliance with regulations from the State Board of Health and the State Fire Marshal (including an automatic fire detection sprinkler system), but it questioned the attractiveness of the building, with the back of the building now effectively having become the front of the building. Haugendale and the railroad were no longer central to the building identity. The report also focused on the need for repairs or renovation for porches, stairs, flooring, and bathroom facilities to keep up with resident needs and codes.

The sentimental value of the property, having been a gift, was well noted - along with the importance of the well maintained 100 grave cemetery. But that seemed to be an important acknowledgement, rather that an argument to persist in the mission of the original Aase Haugen home in Haugendale.

Looking to the future of the Decorah Retirement Center. The same report noted that the Retirement Center, licensed as a nursing home with a capacity of 84, would soon increase that
capacity to 98, thanks in part to generous bequests from Orin Krogstad and William Wegner.

The report also called for more office space, more therapy space, more nursing staff accommodations, restructuring of chapel space, attention to parking and hard surface drives, paving Ohio Street, and the development of sidewalks.

Ultimately, the report called for a comprehensive review of the type of geriatric services that would be offered in the future, an evaluation of ground plans to meet those determined goals, and exploration of financing for expansion.

As early as 1961, The Aase Haugen Board was discussing the idea of a continuum of care to, “include a total concept of the needs of retired people. Facilities will be on hand for all four types of older people: 1. healthy retired people, 2. ‘shelter’ people who are unsure of themselves, 3. infirm people who need nursing care and 4. ‘intensive patients’ who need... care short of actual hospital treatment.” from the Feb. 26, 1961 Dubuque Telegraph Herald. There were plans to utilize the remaining acres adjacent to the Decorah Retirement Center to fulfill these facilities.

1974 Closure of original Aase Haugen Home. Renaming. As an assistant administrator for 11 years, with his primary responsibility being the rural Home, Glen Larson became Administrator of Aase Haugen Homes in 1973 upon the retirement of Virgil Hougen. During his brief two years as chief administrator came the inevitable closure of Aase Haugen Home on the farm. It had simply become too hard to comply with

Unpopular decision. More than one person was drawn to an angry conclusion over the closing of Aase Haugen Homes on the farm. There was a special something about it that the community and its residents and staff loved.

“The State forcibly closed the doors and residents were compelled to go to other homes, most in other communities; many cried, the staff cried, and I wept within. Aase Haugen Home had died.” Excerpt from Virgil C. Hougen as published in the 1987 Herald Newsletter.

Ecumenical Expansion. Originally Aase Haugen Homes, Inc. was affiliated only with the American Lutheran Church and listed 39 Lutheran Churches as members in 1965, but a 1976 board of directors invited congregations of local established Christian churches to be member churches in the corporation.

Many of the smaller rural Lutheran churches were merging or closing, and outlying area churches in Cresco, West Union, Clermont, Elgin, Waukon, Elkader, Monona & St. Olaf had towns closer to them developing their own long-term care facilities.

Aase Haugen Homes had gone from 39 corporate member congregations to 24 in 11 years.

By 1980, three other denominations had joined as Aase Haugen Homes members. The by-laws were officially amended to include not only Lutheran, but other denominations in the corporate member congregations. Aase member churches total 25.
increasing state and federal regulations in the dated building - despite structural integrity and a continued commitment to its mission and residents.

It was a logical name transition, and the Decorah Retirement Center soon assumed the name of Aase Haugen Home.

More changing times, needs and regulations.

In 1975, Bernadean L. Koehler assumed administration of the corporation. She had served the Home for eleven years as Office and Business Manager, and an additional two years as Assistant to the Administrator prior to her promotion to Administrator. She found herself tying up many loose ends from projects just coming to fruition during her 13-year term as Administrator.

The original Home was sold in 1976 to Dean Schwarz to become the South Bear Pottery School. Eventually both farms were also sold to help finance the 61 space addition to the newly named, centrally located, Aase Haugen Homes in 1978.

The 1978 expansion increased the total bed count to 159. The fund-raising committee raised $400,000 during their fund drive towards the addition, leaving around $1,000,000.00 to be financed. After all was said and done, the home was left with a mortgage. In fact, it took the Home only 11 years to fully pay off the mortgage on the 60-bed addition. On Sat., May 30, 1990, approximately 100 people gathered in the Aase Haugen Dining Room for a service celebrating the “Mortgage Burning,” meaning Aase Haugen Homes was once more debt free.

As early as 1974, Aase Haugen Homes’ Board of Directors had been privately talking about establishing a series of low-income apartments for seniors across the street from Aase Haugen Homes, where services could

The Glen Larson Family. entertains at the Original Aase Haugen Home. Glen was the first Administrator who was not a Pastor, but he did have deep convictions about the religious aspect of resident’s lives. Glen’s wife was also a cook at the Original Home and transferred to the New Aase Haugen Homes upon the old home’s closing.

In 1970, the pastor of the Ossian Stavanger parish, Pastor Duane Manson, presented Aase Haugen Homes with a beautiful bell from the Virden Bell Co. It still hangs in the Chapel today. Originally it was rung at meal time and for the chapel hour.
be easily accessed if needed. Many planning sessions were held also discussing a revisit of the Retirement Center concept, a place where people could come and live when they did not need nursing care, but could still enjoy the support of a community of friends.

Leadership and service changes
Under the administration of Bernadean Koehler, the Aase Haugen Homes had said goodbye to the past, grown the capacity of the new Home and stabilized the operations with state of the art techniques and equipment.

Aase Haugen Homes provided 24-hour nursing care to up to 159 infirm and custodial care residents. Administrators came and went for short periods of time following Bernadean’s retirement, including Steven Moss, interim administrator Isaac Kuhn, and Jonathan Hougen, who led from 1992 to 1994. Just months after taking on this new role, Jonathan Hougen applied for Medicare certification on behalf of Aase Haugen Homes. Aase Haugen Homes was then the first long-term care facility in Winneshiek County to offer Medicare-certified rehabilitation and skilled care—phase 4.

In 1987 Koehler(l) presented 25-year recognition plaques to Housekeeping Supervisor Susan Ramsey (r) and nurse’s aide Barb Hellen, who continues to work part-time as a universal worker in Aase Haugen Assisted Living as of 2015!

Administrator Jonathan Hougen, (r) presented a recognition plaque to retiring board member Erling Naeseth (l) at the 1993 Annual Meeting of the Aase Haugen Corporation.
Regulations were redefining the industry and with the expansion of services, Aase Haugen Homes was as in demand as ever. Deb Myhre, Director of Nursing at Aase Haugen Homes noted, “There will be a few changes incorporated into the skilled level compared to the current intermediate level of care. Physicians will visit and recertify the level of care at least once every 30 days during the first 90 days of residency, and every 60 days following. The resident’s skilled level of care will require more professional nursing time and therefore more assessments and documentation done. Policies and procedures have to be written to incorporate the changes and others for the nursing staff to care for our skilled residents.”

In 1993, The Aase Haugen Homes corporation received approval from the Congregational Delegates to begin plans for an Assisted Living Retirement Home on the Aase Haugen Homes campus on Ohio St. This would later be turned over to Oneota Housing, where the Oneota Village sits today. The board also begins planning for an independent living Retirement Center, just like Aase Haugen Home began.

In the years following Jonathan Hougen’s administration, which ended in 1994, several construction projects were completed and the planned expansion of services was accomplished with a visionary board, the support of the congregations and several large bequests.

Philanthropy drives change: full circle to Nordic Drive.

The mission of Aase Haugen Homes has always been a social ministry. Just as Aase Haugen had been shown the way to work through the Lord, many more have also shown the way, helping others through their philanthropy.
Arlin and Maxine Falck had always been strong supporters of Aase Haugen Homes, and in 1997 through his will, he left a gift of $880,000 to the Home. The Aase Haugen Foundation was established shortly after to invest and grow this most generous gift as a quasi-endowment into continued support for the Homes’ operations and expansion of services.

Vennehjem—phase 1
Aase Haugen Homes board of directors began looking into expanding services into the continuum of care that had been envisioned since the early 1960s. They built the Vennehjem Active 55+ Community, pictured above, in 2000 for seniors who were independent, yet enjoyed having freedom from toiling over all aspects of their own home and sought a community of their peers, much like the original Aase Haugen Home’s intent.

Going strong and offering a truly secure, carefree lifestyle of active folks still gardening, decorating and participating in the daily life throughout the community, Vennehjem on Nordic Drive brings the vision full circle from the day the original Aase Haugen Home for the Aged opened in 1915.

Assisted living begins—phase 2
In 2001, 8 assisted living apartments were renovated from the ‘I’ wing, added in 1978. Over $10,000 was donated through the Annual Appeal letters in addition to a $360,000 state grant received for the project. Thus began Aase Haugen Assisted Living, yet another facet in the continuum of care that was becoming all of Aase Haugen Senior Services.

Independent Living
When planning the construction of Vennehjem, the board was asked whether they wanted to offer large home sizes or large common areas. They replied “Both!” Vennehjem was built with homes ranging from 1-bedroom 634 sq. ft to 2-bedroom+ 1,589 sq. ft. in 10 different floor plans, most with two bathrooms and two bedrooms. It has many on-site features as well as an underground heated garage and car wash bay!

Over the years, the community members have planted numerous flower gardens on the grounds, and continue to oversee tree placement and the overall landscape design.

Vennehjem sits on 14 of the 40 acres originally purchased on Nordic Drive.
immediately began planning to add more apartments and looked to yet again expand services. In 2005, Assisted Living Services were first offered by Aase Haugen Homes at Oneota Village Assisted Living.

This era’s administration, backed by an eager board, contributed the most wide variety of service expansions to date. No longer just a nursing facility, but a full continuum of care – a continuing care retirement community - for the people needing senior services. The vision of Pastor Virgil Hougen and the board from 1961 was being realized.

In the nursing facility, not to be left out of the change brought about at the new millennium, culture change was adopted in 2001 and the commitment to providing resident-centered care tailored to personal and individual preferences was made.

Memory Care Assisted Living
In 2005, a master site plan was created, envisioning a new nursing facility and modern assisted living facilities all on the Nordic Drive Campus. However, with this plan tabled, the 2007 building project was a Memory Care Assisted Living wing with 8 apartments and addition of 4 more assisted living apartments on the Ohio campus.

For this, they utilized a grant from the State of Iowa for $540,000 and a low-interest loan of $300,000 from the USDA. In addition, $11,000 in donations from our congregation and community members supported the project.

Memory Care Assisted Living was the first of its kind in Winneshiek County, with many hours spent developing the program to fit the needs and regulations for the care of those with early dementia. It too filled immediately, meeting the need for its services.
In 2011, Aase Haugen Homes renovated 13 residential care rooms into 8 new assisted living apartments, creating Valley Assisted Living.

During this time, Aase Haugen Homes was serving upwards of 250 people each year, more people served in one year than in the first 10 years of operation!

In 2012, Aase Haugen Senior Services was established as the parent corporation for Aase Haugen Homes, Aase Haugen Assisted Living and Vennehjem— all services under one umbrella. 50 acres of land adjacent to the Nordic Drive campus were purchased for future developments. The master site plan was not forgotten.

To our residents
Below, Ivar Brandt, the first resident at Aase Haugen Home, residents identified only as the fireman and the engineer, and Hilda Lovstuen and Nora Smorstad making lefse for the holidays.

To the next 100 years...and beyond
Looking back at our past 100 years of care, support and growth with the families and ancestors of our community, Aase Haugen has been a leader, an innovator in senior care since the very beginning. And we are also very proud to come full circle from Haugendale, a community of active seniors looking for comfort and compassion with each other, — a place to share and pool their resources for the common good,— to Nordic Drive, where seniors can again find compassion, comfort and friendship in a community setting, working together to make life there a wonderful experience, sharing their talents, their time and their wisdom for the good of all.

Within the whole of Aase Haugen Senior Services, the staff strive to provide Compassion and Companionship, Healing and Hope to all we serve. They provide care and advocate for those they serve to ease their challenges and help them and their families adjust to changes in their lives so that seniors going through the aging process do not have to do so alone.

Aase Haugen Senior Services, as a

Part of the Community.
Aase Haugen resident have always been included in any major community celebration. Around Nordic Fest every year, the Jr. Nordic Dancers come in for a performance, and lefse or other Norwegian goodies are made at that time as well. During the Winneshiek County Fair, the Fair Board has offered a performance of one of their top magicians or an animal show. And the 4-H groups are more than happy to bring in their animals for a visit as well.
Continuing Care Retirement Community, strives to offer seniors all the components needed for healthy aging, nurturing the body, mind and soul with compassion and companionship, leading to healing and hope. They offer knowledge, compassion and experience to everyone in the Aase Haugen Family through every change, to guide them and advocate for them through the unfamiliar and often confusing process that is senior care.

What was true in 1968 is still true today, and will be true for the next 100 years!

“The support given to Aase Haugen Homes is passed along and directly benefits the members of our community and members of our congregations; the parents, the children. What a difference Aase Haugen Homes makes in our community.” Rev. Virgil Hougen

What Aase Haugen Senior Services does today is not limited to you or them, not even to the people they serve currently. The decisions made today will hopefully ensure that the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of our community will have Aase Haugen Senior Services to rely upon when they too need care in their retirement years. It is in our hands. With the support, guidance and help of the community, local congregations, friends and family, the Aase Haugen Senior Services legacy can be their solace, our contribution can be their comfort.

Flood of 2008.

Aase Haugen Homes on Ohio St was evacuated only once, during the flood of 2008 when water threatened to crest the dike between the river and the Home. Roads were flooded out and pumps were used continuously for over 72 hours to keep water from infiltrating the facility. Luckily, Aase Haugen Homes suffered minor damage from water and residents were moved back home after 36 hours in temporary shelters at various churches and organizations.

The support that poured out from the community was inspiring. Community members volunteered hours of assistance, equipment, food and supplies to ensure the residents were safe and well-cared for.

The Children.

St. Benedict’s Catholic School 4th grade class has been participating in the Adopt-a-Grandparent program at Aase Haugen Homes for over a decade. They share their talents, listen to stories, and plan fun crafts and activities together with the Aase Haugen residents. The children coming today may be the staff of tomorrow. Many of the staff of yesterday are residents of today.
A letter from the Executive Director, 2015

When asked what he had learned in his life, Andy Rooney once said “that the best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person”. Aase Haugen Senior Services has had the benefit of 100 years of the finest teachers in the land and we are the benefactors of those lessons.

First and foremost we find ourselves in a day where more persons are considered seniors than any other time in our recorded history. Baby Boomers, as they’re referred to, are reaching age sixty-five at the rate of ten thousand each day and will continue to do so for the next fifteen years. Decorah and its’ surrounding area is no stranger to this statistic and in fact, boast numbers well above the national average for seniors.

Aase Haugen Senior Services is preparing to move forward with plans for a new facility utilizing the Nordic Dr. campus that will enable us to meet the needs of this growing population for decades to come and do so in a way that embraces changes in technology, healthcare, staff development and social engagement.

Communities that can demonstrate a commitment to a continuum of care will be better positioned for many of the administrative and financial changes that face all of healthcare. Aase Haugen Senior Services’ goal is to be the first choice in post-acute care and to become the first choice of an Accountable Care Organization process where we can demonstrate our special skill set in short-term rehabilitation, sub-acute care and memory care services.

Building upon our already well-established relationship with other healthcare providers will ensure that Aase Haugen Senior Services remains a significant factor in the healthcare delivery of Decorah seniors for the next 100 years and beyond.

We’re excited about our future and building upon the legacy of Aase Haugen and her vision of providing a place that ensures respect and dignity for all who are in need. Thank you for sharing in this historic event and for being a partner in our future.

Jeffrey K. Schmidt, MS, ACHCA
Executive Director, 2013—
Aase Haugen Senior Services,
Continuum Healthcare
Aase Haugen Homes/Senior Services Congregational History

Aase Haugen Ownership (excerpt from 1940 History book of AHH)

The Aase Haugen Homes is the property of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America and is under the general supervision of its Board of Trustees and Board of Charities, which prescribe the general rules and regulations under which the home is operated. The administrative officers of the Home are the Board of Directors, elected by the Church, and a manager appointed by the Board of Directors with the approval of the Board of Trustees and Board of Charities. The Manager is under the immediate authority of the Board of Directors and works in cooperation with the Board. The Accounts of the Home are audited annually by an auditor appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Church to audit accounts of institutions owned by the church.

1960, The American Lutheran Church gave all properties, deeds and holdings of Aase Haugen Home, Sunset Home and all property held for its future expansion to the newly formed corporation, Aase Haugen Homes, Inc., to be governed by 39 Lutheran churches locally, instead of nationally. From these congregations were to be selected board members and voting delegates.

1975, 24 local congregations - all Lutheran Churches - were the Corporate Member Congregations. Many of the smaller rural churches were merging or closing, and outlying area churches in Cresco, West Union, Clermont, Elgin, Waukon, Elkader, Monona and St. Olaf had towns closer to them developing their own long-term care facilities.

In 1976, the Board of Aase Haugen Homes invited other area churches to join the Corporate Member Congregations of AHH.

In 1977, First United Methodist and Congregational United Church of Christ joined the AHH Corporate Member Congregation supporters.

1979, With ever increasing costs and improvements due to increasing regulations, the board again extended an invitation to various area churches, as Our Savior Church of Lansing, First Lutheran of West Union and Waterville Lutheran had resigned as Corporate Member Congregations. St. Benedict’s church joined at this time, bringing the number of Corporate Member Congregations to 25.

1980, The Aase Haugen Homes by-laws were amended to include other denominations as Corporate Member Congregations, as long as a majority was held by Lutheran Churches.

2000, Zion Lutheran Church resigned as an AHH Corporate Member Congregation, leaving 22 local churches as members.

2008, The board once again extended an invitation to area churches to become Corporate Member Congregations. Living Hope Baptist Church joined the AHH Corporate Member Congregations, bringing us to our current total of 23.

As of 2015, we have 23 Corporate Member Congregations including;

Big Canoe Lutheran Church, Highland Lutheran Church, Burr Oak Lutheran Church, Hesper Lutheran Church, Calmar Lutheran Church, Springfield Lutheran Church, Canoe Ridge Lutheran Church, Glenwood Lutheran Church, Hauge Lutheran, St. John’s Lutheran Church, Madison Lutheran, Peace Lutheran, Orleans Lutheran, Ossian Lutheran Church, Stavanger Lutheran Church, Congregational United Church Of Christ, First United Methodist Church, Decorah Lutheran Church, First Lutheran Church, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, St. Benedict’s Catholic Church, Washington Prairie Lutheran Church, and Living Hope Baptist Church.
Historical Timeline of Aase Haugen Home, the founding of Aase Haugen Senior Services

1910  Aase Haugen, a Norwegian immigrant, died and left her property to the United Norwegian Lutheran Church to be used in establishing and maintaining a home for the elderly people in need of assistance under the name of the “Aase Haugen Home.”

1911  The Decorah Lutheran Church’s own Rev. O.E. Schmidt was elected on behalf of the Norwegian Lutheran Church to solicit funds for the establishment of the Aase Haugen Home. The Aase Haugen Home Board of Trustees is formed from members of the Decorah church circuit.

1914  The construction of the Aase Haugen Home began on the 240 acre farm.

1915  Aase Haugen Home opened and admitted the first two residents, with room for 50. “Each resident of the home is furnished all that he needs including room and board, laundry, clothing, incidentals, nursing and medical care and final burial in the Aase Haugen Home cemetery.” Many more residents came to enjoy this service in the following years.

1953  Need for elder care grew in the county. A similar home called The Sunset Home, to house 24, was established in Calmar by the Aase Haugen Board. Aase Haugen Homes, Inc. was established.

1963  Recognizing there was still a greater need for elder care, the Decorah Retirement Center was built. The majority of the rooms being private. It is part of the present Aase Haugen Homes Complex. With 75 rooms.

1969  The Sunset Home in Calmar was sold and 14 more rooms were added on to the Decorah Retirement Home.

1974  The original Aase Haugen Home on the farm was closed. The Decorah Retirement Center is renamed Aase Haugen Home.

1978  A new wing was added to expand capacity to 159 residents and existing areas of the Aase Haugen Home were remodeled and updated.

1992  Aase Haugen Home becomes the first facility in Winneshiek County to offer skilled care under Medicare.
1994  The Aase Haugen Foundation was established to manage donations and investments to prepare for Aase Haugen Home future growth to meet increasing elder care needs. A Foundation Board of Trustees was formed from members of the congregation circuit.

1996  The Aase Haugen Properties Board of Trustees is formed to manage and plan for the newly acquired properties, a full 40 acres, on the north edge of Decorah.

1997  The Aase Haugen Home Board of Trustees approved the planning of Vennehjem, the first independent living facility for older adults in Winneshiek County, to expand Aase Haugen’s role of service to the community.

2000  The Vennehjem senior living complex, with 50 separate apartments and several large common areas, was completed.

2001  The Aase Haugen Home in Decorah opens 8 assisted living rooms that have been renovated from a hall off the main complex. Reduces nursing care capacity to 118.

2005  Aase Haugen Homes begins offering Assisted Living Services to Oneota Village Assisted Living at 5 Ohio St.

2007  4 more assisted living apartments are renovated and 8 Memory Care Assisted Living apartments are opened. The first Memory Care Assisted Living in Winneshiek County. Nursing capacity lowered to 109.

2011  Residential/custodial care services are shut down. 13 residential care rooms remodeled into 8 additional assisted living apartments, Valley Assisted Living. Nursing capacity set to 99.

2012  50 acres of land is purchased adjacent to the Nordic Drive Campus for future development of the continuum of care. Aase Haugen Senior Services is established to encompass the whole continuum of care under one name.

2014  Planning begins to build a new nursing facility and assisted living campus on Nordic Drive, for the future of Aase Haugen Senior Services.

2015  Aase Haugen Senior Services celebrates 100 years of family, care and service, thanks to the support of the local congregations, residents, tenants and community members, family members, dedicated staff and generous supporters and volunteers.

Here’s to the next 100 years together!
2015 Events

Feb.15: Centennial Celebration Inaugural Concert
1:30-4:00pm  A Cornucopia of Concertinas at Aase Haugen Homes, Chapel, reception to follow

March 28  7 pm: Theodora Cormontan Concert

March 29  1:30 pm: Theodora Cormontan Concert. A famous Norwegian composer who lived at Aase Haugen with her sister in the 1920’s. Both concerts at Decorah Lutheran Church Sanctuary.

April 12  11:30 am: Traditional Holiday Easter Dinner
At Aase Haugen Homes, for residents, families and staff. By reservation only. Contact Rose at (563) 382-3603 to reserve your seat.

May 18: Aase Haugen Centennial Golf Scramble
Oneota Golf Course, Registration begins at 9 am., call (563)382-3603 to sponsor a team or pre-register.

May 10-16 National Nursing Home Week. Many activities and presentations at Aase Haugen Homes connecting our past to our future. Be sure to stop in!

May 25  2 pm: Memorial Day Service
At the Original Aase Haugen Cemetery. Remembering those who have passed on during 100 years of care. Open to the public. Memorial Day Reception to follow immediately at Vennehjem.

June 30 Centennial Dedication Ceremony and Family Picnic
At the Original Aase Haugen Home with food, games, and music. Dedication picture with community taken at 5:30 pm. All invited to attend.