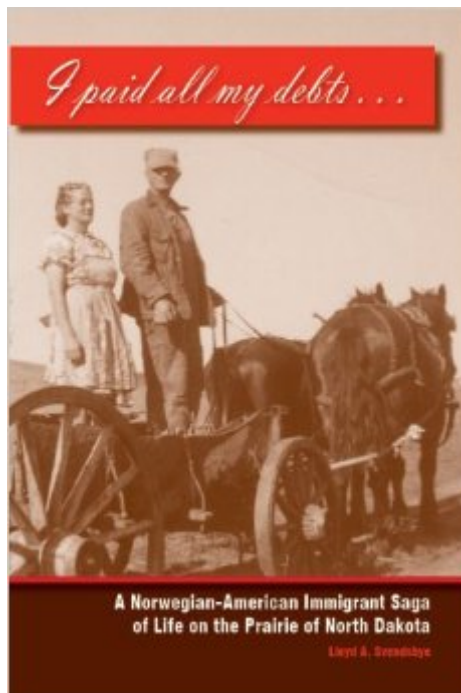


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# I Paid All My Debts: A Norwegian-American Immigrant Saga Of Life On The Prairie Of North Dakota



## Synopsis

The prospect of 160 acres of free land enticed thousands of Norwegians to immigrate to America, with high hopes for a better, more prosperous life. Those who settled in North Dakota never expected they would need several times that amount of land, nor did they imagine the high costs involved in meeting the homestead requirements. This is a story of two families for whom the promise of America miscarried. As they reached a point of borrowing money to move their dream forward the depression hit, as did a drought on the prairie. But the family spirits never died, and the immigrants never wished to be elsewhere.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is not merely the story of one family, it is America's story and as such is informative, inspirational and indispensable. This book describes in human terms what it look to survive in one of the West's most harsh and challenging environments. The meticulously researched details of this story from crop prices to the cost of a railroad ticket to the weather on a particular day lend this story a note of authenticity that places this book on the must read list of anyone interested in the American experience.

I met author Svendsbye recently at a funeral for a mutual friend. He is a gracious person and was delighted to learn that I had purchased and read his book. He thanked me repeatedly. This story is interesting for the reasons cited by other reviewers above: it is the story of many American immigrants; it is the saga of many Norwegian immigrants; and it is especially well-researched in

regard to the Svendsbye family and local community history. What makes it truly compelling however is how personal it is. Svendsbye shares the difficulties and joys of his parent's life on the North Dakota prairie in the first half of the 20th century. The struggles of homesteading are portrayed well. There is value, the author contends, in completing worthwhile work. It was an incredible task for his father to keeping his fiscal nose above the rising tide of accruing debt -- the result of severe, extended drought and the Great Depression. And yet in the end, he took satisfaction in having paid all his debts.

With North Dakota pretty much branded as "flyover country", even among its neighboring states so often lumped into the same category by the "more sophisticated" residents of the East and West coasts, this was an eye-opening read. I hesitated before ordering the book, fearing it might end up a disjointed memoir of a struggling North Dakota family fresh off the boat from Norway. I wasn't far off the mark as far as the book's talking points: hardship, strife, success, failure, birth, death, infinity. But come on, we're talking about North Dakota, the families who settled it, and those who have survived and remain there. This book examines a culture that has withstood everything Mother Nature has hurled in its residents' paths. Politics, economics, education, science, society...they're all covered, and they're all intertwined. Ultimately, this is a story of determination. Do they all live happily ever after? Of course not. One might say the story is still unfolding. I have roots in North Dakota. My dad was raised there, but after World War Two ended he wound up in the state of Washington. Like many North Dakotans, he said it was a good place to be from. Though my family was German-American, the tracings of the Svendsbye family of Norwegian descent echo many of the chapters from my dad's early days in North Dakota. I'm glad I read it.

I bought this book because my ancestors also lived in N Dakota and had immigrated there from Norway. Mine settled on the east side of N. Dakota. Reading it was like listening to my dad telling his story. A lot alike. Was a very interesting book. Hard to believe the hardships they faced, but my dad said there was a lot of hunger and bad growing land. Good book for anybody w/ Norwegian ancestry.

There is enormous distance entailed in moving from Europe to America. There is even greater distance traveled from the beginning of the 20th century to today. The certainty is that those who make such a transition will encounter strangeness and trouble while it occurs. The Svendsbye family makes the (real) journey with unmistakable dignity and integrity that give courage and hope to

those who follow them on their own journeys of change.

So good!!! I used google to read more about the author and really enjoying learning about his contribution to society.

I am very interested in this subject area and really wanted to like this book, being a descendant of Norwegian-American immigrants and having grown up in North Dakota. I started reading this book with great expectations. But after laboriously working my way through the first few chapters, I just could not convince myself to continue with it. I even had my wife look at it to see if it was just me, but she had the same problem. Lots of facts and information, but not told in a way that made it at all easy to read. I was disappointed.

A good review of Norwegian settlers.

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