



# The Rise of Jonas Olsen: A Norwegian Immigrant's Saga

*Johannes Wist*

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## **The Rise of Jonas Olsen: A Norwegian Immigrant's Saga** Johannes Wist

The road to riches for the hero of this sweeping historical novel ends up being rockier than he initially expects. Norwegian immigrant Jonas Olsen arrives in late nineteenth-century Minneapolis with little money and less English. He quickly learns to reinvent himself—from laboring in sewer construction to building a successful dry goods business, from losing everything in a banking collapse to settling the Red River Valley. While an eminently likable character, Jonas can also be ruthless in his ambition to find success in America.

*The Rise of Jonas Olsen* is at once an immigrant novel, business novel, political novel, and a western, offering a rich and panoramic view of Scandinavian immigrant life in the Upper Midwest. Wist combines realism and satire to depict the role Norwegian Americans played in the economic, political, and cultural life of the Upper Midwest.

Originally published serially in the Norwegian-language newspaper the *Decorah Posten* in the 1920s, *The Rise of Jonas Olsen* illustrates an immigrant's struggle to preserve his identity and heritage while striving to become fully accepted as an American.

Johannes B. Wist (1864–1923) was a journalist and editor of the *Decorah Posten* from 1900 to 1923.

Orn Øverland is professor of American literature at the University of Bergen, Norway, and the author of *The Western Home: A Literary History of Norwegian America and Immigrant Minds, American Identities: Making the United States Home, 1870-1930*.

Todd W. Nichol is editor of the Norwegian-American Historical Association publication program.

Published in cooperation with the Norwegian-American Historical Association.

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