

# The Norwegian-American Historical Association

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## NEWS LETTER

FROM THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE TO  
THE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

EDITED BY J. JØRGEN THOMPSON, SECRETARY P. M. GLASOE, Co-EDITOR

### TRIENNIAL MEETING

The fifth regular triennial meeting of the Norwegian-American Historical Association will be held in Hotel Leamington, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Tuesday, January 3, 1939. The business session begins at two o'clock in the afternoon. At six thirty there will be a dinner session with program following. This will be an open session and the members of the Association are asked to invite guests. Reservations should be made with Mr. O. I. Hertsgaard, 500 Northwestern National Bank Building, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The price per plate will be \$1.00.

### RECOMMENDED CHANGES IN THE BY-LAWS

At the last meeting of the Executive Board the President, Mr. Arthur Andersen, was asked to appoint a committee to study the need of possible amendments to the certificate of incorporation and the by-laws of the Association. The following men were appointed as members of the committee: Drs. L. W. Boe, Birger Osland, Theodore C. Blegen, and Kenneth Björk.

The committee submits the following report to be considered at the triennial meeting in January. They agreed unanimously that no changes should be made in the certificate of incorporation. They recognized, however, the necessity of several amendments in the by-laws. The following changes were agreed upon:

#### BY-LAWS

1. ARTICLE II. The last sentence should read, "Life membership fees and memorial membership fees shall be set aside as a permanent fund."

2. ARTICLE VI. SECTION 4. It was agreed that the words "and shall be custodian of and responsible for the archives of the Association" should be struck out.

3. ARTICLE VI. SECTION 6. After the words "placed in such first mortgages or first mortgage bonds as may be approved by the various states as legal investment for trust funds" should be added "*Except such first mortgages or first mortgage bonds as may be approved by the executive board for investment of the funds of the Association.*"

4. ARTICLE VIII. Add to the last sentence "*and shall report to the president of the Association once a year at the request of the president, giving an account of the work in their respective territories and making recommendations for the promotion of the general welfare of the Association.*"

5. ARTICLE IX. Strike out.

6. ARTICLE X. The last sentence should read: "Such amendments may be proposed by not less than twenty members of the Association, whose names shall appear in a petition presented to the executive board, or by the executive board itself."

7. The following article, possible as Article IX, should be inserted:

"The archives of the Association shall be under the immediate care of a curator, whose task it shall be to classify and catalog the documents in the archives. At the close of the triennial meeting of the members and at the place of such meeting, the executive board shall appoint, for a term of three years, a board of archives, which is to consist of three or more members of the Association. It shall be the duty of this board, in cooperation with the curator of the archives, to build up and promote the efficiency of the archives and historical collection of the Association."

The articles of incorporation and by-laws will be found in STUDIES and RECORDS, Volume I.

### DITLEF G. RISTAD

The first president of the Norwegian-American Historical Association, the Rev. Ditlef G. Ristad, died at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 1938, at the age of 75. In the death of Dr. Ristad cultural interests of importance to all Norwegian-Americans have suffered a great loss. For several years he had been compelled to retire more and more from positions of leadership, but whether occupying a chairmanship or not, Dr. Ristad was the conscious influence upon which others relied in and out of counsels.

His interests were numerous and extensive, his talents liberal and exceptionally well husbanded. The weight of his influence was always to be found on the side of united action, and the impulse of his kindly personality was a gratifying contribution in any field where cultural matters were at stake. Dr. Ristad was impelled by a heart that beat tenderly for his mother country. This is nowhere better attested than in the poem, "We greet thee, Norway," which has been called the most beautiful greeting ever sent to Norway from this side.

Dr. Ristad belonged to a class of men from Norway sometimes called "seminarists." They were trained for common school teaching, and while their course of preparation was very brief, a large number of them came to America and became a source of spiritual leadership among our people. Many of them continued as parochial school teachers for twenty-five to fifty years, doing a foundation work upon which we are still building. They are too often unheralded and unsung but their works surely do follow them. The other seminarists were ordained to the ministry and became a bulwark of strength in furthering a sound catechetical instruction as a basis for an intelligent Christian development. Dr. Ristad was an outstanding example of this group.

Dr. Ristad's pedagogical training and experience led to his being chosen head, successively, of three of our schools; in each case he left the impress of great earnestness and vision. Confronted with a period of what might be considered tragic changes in the field of his greatest interests, Dr. Ristad never turned cynic nor pessimist. He was philosopher enough to see the trends and while, like Landstad, he plunged into the breach to save what could be salvaged from the inevitable change that must sweep over our homes and institutions as history marches on, he never lost sight of the real issues at stake. The soul life of our people was his first concern. The expression of that, whether it be in the realm of literature, in music, in preaching the gospel, must be kept genuine and true to the high ideals that came with us across the sea. As long as we contribute a manhood and womanhood of character, diligently turning our talents into channels of appreciation of all that is fine, ennobling and constructive, our national group will be looked up to as an asset of greatest value in the constant building of American democracy.

The very ideals Dr. Ristad brought with him from his Christian childhood home, from his teachers' seminary, from his native precinct, the famous Nordtrönderlag, where stood the early cradle of personal and political liberties of our people, those were the virtues that dominated and directed his entire life and made him welcome among all racial groups of our cosmopolitan constituency. Wherever he lived he joined whole-heartedly in human-interest projects. It was natural for him to sponsor lecture and concert courses for the community. He was so highly respected by the bar association of his city that he was made an honorary member, and many were the times that the judge, before sentencing boys and young men, sent them to Dr. Ristad for the "talking to" which usually concludes the sad episode of delinquency and crime. Dr. Ristad was in truth the apostle of the emigrant. Through his efforts the emigrant was taught, not only to know himself and to appreciate his background, but he became in a very emphatic way the interpreter of the spirit of America to his emigrant brothers. On several occasions he was privileged to visit his boyhood haunts and brought to Norway that message of appreciation and thankfulness which, in recent years, has done so much to build a bridge of mutual love and understanding between Norway and the Norwegian settlements over here.

—P. M. G.

SECRETARY'S NOTE:—Dr. Ristad served four years as president of our Association and was rounding out his ninth year as vice-president when he passed away. From his pen came several contributions to Studies and Records. He was an untiring spokesman for our Association in the Norwegian press in this country.

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Association's archives were enriched in early November by the addition of a valuable collection of Laurence M. Larson papers. Three large boxes of bound volumes, reprints of scholarly articles, magazines, and newspaper clippings have become a permanent part of the Association's rapidly growing historical collection. Of greatest interest in the Larson papers are the printed works of Norwegian-American scholars. Numerous contributions by Larson, Flom, Knaplund,

Blegen, and others are among the collection, which includes 225 items. \* \* \* \*

Secretary J. Jørgen Thompson leaves December 17 for Manitowoc, Wis., to consult with Mrs. D. G. Ristad over the disposal of her late husband's papers. As one of the pioneers in the Norwegian-American Historical Association, Rev. Ristad naturally accumulated many volumes and items of interest to the archives. His correspondence is also a vital source for the history of the Association.

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Mr. Alf Houkom, curator, has been at work for several months re-cataloguing the materials in the archives. The objective, of course, is to make the items of the collection more readily accessible to research workers. The enormity of the task is indicated by the fact that the archives now include over 3,000 bound volumes and thousands of unpublished documents. In this work Mr. Houkom has been assisted by Mr. Willis Miller, junior at St. Olaf.

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Many short histories of local churches have been sent to the archives. These histories constitute a valuable addition to our collection. Members of the Association would render a real service by sending in copies of any such histories in their communities. The day is not far off when someone will undertake to write an exhaustive history of the Norwegian church bodies in America. The local histories will simplify his task enormously.

Members are urged again to be on the alert for new materials pertinent to our collection. These include diaries, letters, reminiscences, newspapers, books, account books, ledgers, short biographies, newspaper clippings—in short, anything and everything that deals with Norwegians in America. The archives must grow, or the work of the Association will decline. —K. B.

#### LECTURES IN OSLO

Through the Secretary's office arrangements were made for a series of six lectures to be given by Dr. Einar Haugen at the University in Oslo, Norway, during the first semester of the current academic year.

Dr. Haugen is a member of our Editorial Board. His position in the educational field is that of Chairman of the Department of Scandinavian Literature in the University of Wisconsin.

The title of the whole series delivered by Dr. Haugen is: "Folk og Sprog i det norske Amerika." He gave each lecture a title, as follows:

1. Det store landnåm.
2. Bondemål og bygdefolk.
3. Fra Bygdemål til verdenssprog.
4. Navneskikk i nybygden.
5. Skrift og tale.
6. Diktende trang.

The objective of these lectures was to draw the profile of the immigrant's social and intellectual life, particularly as reflected in his language and literature.

The Secretary received the following cablegram from the committee in charge in Oslo. "Professor Haugen's lectures at the University here are unusually successful."