

# The Norwegian-American Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota

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## NEWS LETTER

FROM THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE TO  
THE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

Edited by J. JÖRGEN THOMPSON, Secretary KENNETH BJÖRK, Co-editor

### LOG BOOK OF A YOUNG IMMIGRANT

We have just been informed by Dr. Blegen, Managing Editor, that Laurence M. Larson's posthumous volume, *The Log Book of a Young Immigrant*, is now in the second page proof stage. The volume, about 325 pages in length, gives the full story of Professor Larson's career, from farm boy in Iowa up to the time he took up his work as historian at the University of Illinois.

Commenting by telephone about Larson's book, Dr. Blegen said it is characterized by mellow wisdom, physical vigor, and liberal outlook. The book is essentially an interpretation of cultural transition, and in the best sense of the term is a study of the Americanization of an intelligent immigrant. Dr. Blegen likens it to *The Making of An American* by Jacob Riis.

The Larson volume has a comprehensive index and a chronological list of the author's other publications.

### IN THE SECRETARY'S MAIL BOX

From time to time the Secretary's office receives letters of such general interest that they deserve space in the *News Letter*. One such letter is from Mr. G. E. Loftfield.

"I hereby enclose," Mr. Loftfield wrote from Oslo, Norway, on April 12, 1939, "a draft for twelve dollars . . . I have for a long time been of the opinion that we, the associate members, who pay only two dollars a year and receive so many valuable publications free, are really getting more than our money's worth. It would no doubt furnish material help to defray the cost of printing these excellent books that we receive from time to time, if we would keep the great cause in mind by giving at least one occasional 'thank offering' of a five or ten dollar bill in addition to our annual dues. There is still a gigantic work to be done in this great field of treasuring the stream of Norwegian-American contribution in the development of American institutions and civilization."

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Mr. Louis Adamic, famous author and himself an immigrant of Jugo-Slav origin, is preparing a study of the various national groups in America. He has become interested in the Norwegian element in the United States and plans to visit Northfield in the near future in search of materials for his projected book.

On March 20 Mr. Adamic wrote: "Thank you so much for your co-operation at this preliminary stage of my project. The pamphlet [*A Review and a Challenge*] you sent me will be of great help later. I knew of it and your work before this. Henry Moe, of the Guggenheim Foundation, has been bringing you up for a couple of years. . . . I am looking forward to my visit to Northfield."

Miss Constance Lindsay Skinner, editor of the *Rivers of America* series of books for Farrar and Rinehart, has taken a keen interest in the work of the Association after reading *A Review and a Challenge*, which she termed "immensely interesting" and copies of which she wanted sent to Historians Henry Steele Commager and Allan Nevins. Members will recall that Professor Walter Havighurst made use of Association publications in the preparation of *Upper Mississippi: A Wilderness Saga*, one of the volumes in the *Rivers of America* series.

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Mrs. Ruth McMahon of Wahpeton, North Dakota, writes: ". . . I am going to send you a few old copies of 'Rodhuggeren,' a Fergus Falls newspaper—from the 90's when I have read a little more of them. They were found as insulator in a house wrecked in this vicinity recently."

### GIFT FROM NORWAY

The people of Norway are very much interested in the Norwegian-American Historical Museum, which is located in Decorah, Iowa. When it appeared certain that His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Olav, would visit this country, the National Association of Museums in Norway took up the question of presenting a gift to the Museum in Decorah. A very large and valuable collection was sent to Decorah in time for His Royal Highness to make the presentation when he visited Luther College on May 7 of this year. This gift complements a generous gift received some years ago thanks to the efforts of Dr. Sandvik of Lillehammer.

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

Thanks to the courtesy of Dr. Karl T. Jacobsen, librarian at Luther College, some extremely valuable newspapers have been added to the Association's archives in Northfield. Wherever duplicates of Norwegian newspapers preserved at Luther have been found—and they are many—the duplicates have been turned over to the Association. Part of this valuable collection was transferred this spring, and the remaining files will be added in the near future.

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Harper and Brothers in April published *Ole Edvart Rølvaag, a Biography*, written by Professors Theodore Jorgenson and Nora Solum of St. Olaf College. This volume of 446 pages gives a full account of Rølvaag's life and interprets his literary work against the background of migration. Rølvaag, it is generally known, was one of the Association's founders and Secretary from 1925 until his death in November, 1931. One of his finest contributions to the Association's growth was his labor in building up the archival collection in Northfield.

Back in 1926 Rølvaag warned the Norwegian element in America against destroying precious records of the past. "If the traditions and narratives," he wrote in *Decorab-Posten* for March 16, "disappear and the documents are lost—as they now are in part—where will the historian of the future get his information? He will find nothing—not even a 'property settlement.' And the artists—poets, painters, sculptors, the great skald and narrator—where will they get their material? Answer now, you who can! But if you are one with us in our aims, come along and be with us in our work. We need all of you and can use all of you. Remember this: great things cannot take place if we do not take hold and work for them."

Writing in the same paper for November 11, 1930, Rølvaag outlined the program for the archives, which he insisted was "nothing less than the collection at one place of all that has been written about and by the Norwegian people in America. That is nothing less than a Herculean task. For it will include copies of all books and pamphlets that have been written about us and by us; next, records of societies, parishes, *Lags*, and all institutions; next, old letters and documents that can throw light over our people in this country; next, files of newspapers; and, finally, photographs both of people and institutions, especially from old times."

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Archival material that will be particularly welcomed by the recently appointed committee on genealogy includes family histories, ancestral charts, family trees, biographies, and sketches and obituaries. It is suggested that all members of the Association provide the archives with such material on their ancestry as they may be in possession of, or if they do not have the material in printed or manuscript form, that they make it their task to furnish it, or interest someone else in the family group in compiling it. It is work that will be cherished by posterity. Families that are fortunate enough to have printed family histories should see to it without fail that copies are placed in the Association's archives at Northfield. It may be mentioned here that of the 11,000 volumes on genealogy at the Minnesota Historical library in St. Paul, not more than a few score deal with Norwegian-American families—a sad commentary on our neglect in writing and preserving ancestral records. Our Swedish cousins are now seeking to make amends for similar neglect, and last year, at the time of the tercentennial of Swedish immigration, the commission in charge asked that every contributor to the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia submit a genealogical chart of his family to be kept permanently in the museum's archives.

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### BOARD OF ARCHIVES MEETS

On Friday, June 2, the Board of Archives responded to a call by Dr. Agnes Larson, chairman, and held a luncheon meeting in the St. Olaf College Cafeteria. The purpose was to outline plans for more vigorous activity in the accumulation and preservation of historical materials. Those present were Dr. Agnes Larson, Dr. Karen Larsen, and Mr. Jacob Hodnefeld, members of the Board; Mr. Alf Houkom, St. Olaf College librarian; Professor J. Jørgen Thompson, Secretary of the Association; Dr. Kenneth

Björk, member of the Editorial Board; and Dr. Arthur Paulson of the St. Olaf faculty. The Board of Archives was created at the triennial meeting of the Association in January of this year.

### New Members Since January 1, 1939

#### LIFE

Homer Halvorson, Watertown, Massachusetts.

#### SUSTAINING

M. R. Simons, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Harry J. Williams, Kenilworth, Illinois.

#### ASSOCIATE

Joh. L. Andresen, Oslo, Norway.  
Nordal O. Anderson, Duluth, Minnesota.  
T. J. Arneson, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Mrs. T. J. Arneson, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Martha C. Blegen, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
A. O. Borke, Chicago, Illinois.  
Chris Prodahl, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
H. N. Bruun, Chicago, Illinois.  
S. T. Burtness, Chicago, Illinois.  
Petra M. Dahl, Chicago, Illinois.  
Agnes L. Danielson, Chicago, Illinois.  
I. Dorrurn, Decorah, Iowa.  
Louise C. Evanson, Chicago, Illinois.  
Edward Evensen, Chicago, Illinois.  
Edvard Fagereng, New York, New York.  
P. O. Flaa, Chicago, Illinois.  
Lillian Glesne, Cincinnati, Ohio.  
C. J. Golee, Evanston, Illinois.  
Victor Hansen, Beverly Hills, California.  
L. Carsten Hatlen, San Francisco, California.  
Avis E. Haugen, Chicago, Illinois.  
E. Biddle Heg, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.  
Sadie M. Hendricksen, Chicago, Illinois.  
Corinne Hogden, Cincinnati, Ohio.  
George L. Jacobson, Chicago, Illinois.  
Harry M. Jacobson, Chicago, Illinois.  
Niels Frithjof Johnsen, New Orleans, Louisiana.  
Hildegard Johnson, Cincinnati, Ohio.  
Louis Kleven, Chicago, Illinois.  
A. Knutsen, Hardanger, Norway.  
Herbert Krause, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.  
J. Norman Lee, Decorah, Iowa.  
Olai Lende, Granite Falls, Minnesota.  
Astrid Lier, New York, New York.  
O. J. Lutness, Enderlin, North Dakota.  
George Martinson, Cleveland Heights, Ohio.  
Hans C. Ness, Sioux City, Iowa.  
Charles H. Norby, Ames, Iowa.  
Norman Nordstrand, Moorhead, Minnesota.  
Mrs. Andrew Oefstedal, Chicago, Illinois.  
Didrick J. Orfield, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Elias Rachie, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
S. J. Rasmussen, Minot, North Dakota.  
H. Ronning, Chicago, Illinois.  
N. N. Ronning, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Martha Selvik, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Peter Skurdalsvold, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
R. O. Storvick, Mason City, Iowa.  
Thorwald C. Thorson, Chicago, Illinois.  
Mrs. Tilda Akersmyr Tofteland, Luverne, Minnesota.  
Mrs. Nora Ulland, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
O. T. Ullsvik, Madison, Wisconsin.  
J. L. Urheim, Chicago, Illinois.  
Mina Field Villardson, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Knut Warland, Chicago, Illinois.  
Clarence Watland, Albert Lea, Minnesota.  
Erling R. West, Pasadena, California.  
Annie C. Wiersen, Chicago, Illinois.  
O. S. Winther, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Nels B. Wold, Chicago, Illinois.