

The Norwegian-American Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota

Number Twenty-Five

August, 1950

News Letter

FROM THE SPONSORING COMMITTEE
25th ANNIVERSARY OBSERVANCE
Edited by Herman Roe, Secretary

SPONSORING COMMITTEE 25th ANNIVERSARY

In response to invitations extended by Senator Edward J. Thye of Minnesota, a representative group of members of the Norwegian-American Historical Association have consented to serve as members of a Sponsoring Committee to arrange for the observance of the 25th Anniversary of the association.

Senator Thye accepted the chairmanship of the Sponsoring Committee at the request of Olaf Halvorson of Huntington Park, California, president of the association, J. Jørgen Thompson of Northfield, Minnesota, secretary, and Birger Osland of Chicago, treasurer, following action by the executive board requesting that he serve in that capacity. Herman Roe, Northfield, Minnesota, publisher, was invited to serve as secretary of the Sponsoring Committee.

In his letter of invitation Senator Thye called attention to the fact that "the Association will be twenty-five years old on October 6, 1950. Many of the members feel that this milestone should be recognized and have suggested that since the organization came into being at St. Olaf College in 1925, the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration should be held there.

"All of us have recognized the constructive work done by the Norwegian-American Historical Association, both in its scholarly publications and in its recognition of the part which our Norse-American people have contributed to our country. The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary will provide an opportunity to review the history of our own organization, and also to bring together those whose interest and support have made possible these excellent accomplishments."

MEMBERS OF SPONSORING COMMITTEE

- Trygve M. Ager, 421 Vine Avenue, Albert Lea, Minnesota
- Congressman Aug. H. Andresen, House Office Building, Washington, D. C.
- Mrs. Sophie Andersen, 1431 Leland Avenue, Chicago 40, Illinois
- Professor William Anderson, University of Minnesota, 111 Melbourne Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, Minn.
- C. F. Berg, Route 1, Box 172, Gary, Illinois
- M. Bjorndal, 7 Lincoln St., Jersey City 7, New Jersey
- Professor Helmer M. Blegen, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- O. L. Ejde, Washington Posten, Seattle, Washington
- G. A. Ellestad, Bauch & Lomb Optical Company, 39 Requa St., Rochester, N. Y.
- Professor Oscar J. Falnes, Room 738E, New York University, Washington Square E, New York 3, N. Y.
- Miss Beulah M. Folkedahl, Blanchardville, Wisconsin
- Mrs. Anna Fuhr, Duluth Skandinav, 24 E. Superior St., Duluth, Minn.
- Anton Gronningsæter, 230 Park Ave., New York 17, New York
- Dr. Gunnar Gundersen, 1836 South Ave., LaCrosse, Wisconsin
- Congressman Harold C. Hagen, 4012 Southern Ave. S.E., Washington 20, D. C.
- Dr. Homer Halvorson, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore 18, Maryland
- Carl G. O. Hansen, Editor "Sons of Norway," 3957 12th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Dr. J. J. Heimark, Fairmont Clinic, Fairmont, Minn.
- O. I. Hertsgaard, 6 East Elmwood Place, Minneapolis 9, Minn.
- P. A. Hovland, Minneapolis Posten, 256 Cedar Ave., Minneapolis 4, Minn.
- Professor Paul Knaplund, University of Wisconsin, Madison 6, Wisconsin
- Egil Krogh, 150 Linden St., Winnetka, Illinois
- Dr. Agnes M. Larson, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.
- Dr. Marie E. Lien, Jones Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 14, Minn.
- John A. Lindrup, Viking, 2405 N. Central Ave., Chicago 47, Ill.
- Einar Lund, Decorah Posten, Decorah, Iowa
- Commander Carl M. Moe, 2214 West 70th, Seattle, Washington
- The Honorable Wilhelm Morgenstjerne, Ambassador from Norway, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Washington 7, D. C.
- Miss Henriette C. K. Neseth, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois
- Mrs. Jon Norstog, 502 West Main St., Decorah, Iowa
- Miss Laura M. Olsen, 830 Chippewa St., Eau Claire, Wisconsin
- Thorsten Y. Olsen, Easton Road, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania
- Dr. Oystein Ore, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut
- J. L. Reque, 4032 N. Keeler Ave., Chicago 41, Illinois
- C. E. Ronning, 1136 Edmer Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois
- Rolf B. Schou, 1438 Jefferson St., San Francisco, Calif.
- Mrs. Alice R. Sonstebly, 1602 Chase Ave., Chicago 26, Illinois
- Carl Søyland, Nordisk Tidende, Brooklyn, N. Y.
- Dr. Anne Tjomsland, 821 Bergan Ave., Jersey City, New Jersey
- I. H. Ulsaker, Normanden, 315 Broadway, Fargo, North Dakota
- Alfred Vaksdal, 55 Goff St., Corning, New York
- Harry J. Williams, 205 Oxford Road, Kenilworth, Illinois
- A. E. Williamson, 333 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Illinois

(Reprinted from the October 9, 1925 issue of the *Northfield, Minnesota, News*)

NORSE HISTORY SOCIETY FORMED

Group Formed at St. Olaf College Session to Perpetuate Records of Pioneers.

Leaders in Norse-American culture representing several states met at St. Olaf College Tuesday and organized The Norwegian-American Historical association, dedicated to the task of collecting and preserving relics and records which may throw light on the life and activity of people of Norwegian birth or descent in America.

The meeting was successful beyond the anticipations of the promoters and the new association was given an auspicious beginning with a charter membership list of 117 representative citizens of Norwegian birth or descent who are prominent in their fields in the north central states. Educators, ministers, authors, editors, doctors, lawyers, judges, state officials, bankers, and leaders in business are represented in the roll of charter members.

Dr. D. G. Ristad of Manitowoc, Wis., was elected president; Dr. L. Larson of the University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill., vice president; Professor O. E. Rølvaag, St. Olaf college, secretary; Professor J. Jørgen Thompson, St. Olaf college, assistant secretary, and Hon. O. M. Oleson of Fort Dodge, Ia., treasurer.

An Historic Meeting

Members chosen to serve on the three standing committees were:

Constitution — Dr. Knute Gjerset, Luther college, Decorah, Ia.; Dr. C. M. Weswig, Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul; Dr. L. W. Boe, president, St. Olaf college.

Board of Editors—Dr. Theodore Blegen of the Minnesota State Historical Society, St. Paul; Dr. Gjerset, Luther College, Decorah, Ia.; Kristian Prestgard, editor, Decorah Posten, Decorah, Iowa.

Board of Finance—O. M. Oleson, Fort Dodge, Ia.; Birger Osland, Chicago; A. C. Floan, St. Paul.

Following a half-day session held in the college gymnasium Tuesday afternoon a tentative constitution was adopted. Fifty-two charter members were present at this meeting.

A banquet was served in the St. Olaf cafeteria in the evening and an interesting program of addresses delivered, with Editor N. N. Ronning of Minneapolis officiating as toastmaster. Talks were given by Kristian Prestgard of Decorah, Ia., Dr. Ingeborg Rasmussen, representing the Norwegian daily, *Skandinaven*, of Chicago; Dr. Theo. Blegen, St. Paul; Dr. Knut Gjerset, Decorah, Ia.; Prof. Olav Lee, Northfield; Gunnar Malmin, Forest City, Ia.; Dr. O. M. Norlie, Decorah, Ia.; Prof. J. A. Holvik, Moorhead; Dr. D. G. Ristad, President Boe and Prof. Rølvaag. Mrs. J. J. Thompson, Miss Ella Hjertaas, a ladies' quartet and an orchestra contributed the music to what was a very delightful and historic occasion.

Purpose Stated

In outlining the purpose of the association the constitution provides that "the association shall help to develop and maintain Norwegian-American historical

archives. Since archives of this character have been created by the Minnesota State Historical Society, St. Paul; Luther College, Decorah, Ia.; St. Olaf College, Northfield, and by the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, these archives shall continue to be the places of deposit of material of this character which the association may be instrumental in collecting; and the closest possible cooperation in this work shall be established between these archives.

"The association shall also help to maintain and develop the museum already existing at Luther College, Decorah, Ia., so that it may become a national Norwegian-American museum. The name of this museum shall be The Norwegian-American Historical Museum.

It will also be the purpose of the association "to encourage and promote Norwegian-American historical research and literary work:

"1. By publishing monographs and other works dealing with Norwegian-American history, literature, art and culture.

"2. By publishing a periodical devoted to Norwegian-American history, literature and culture, when means for this undertaking shall be available.

"The association will seek to create a permanent fund, of which the accrued interest shall be used under the direction of the executive board of the association for the promotion of its aims, and like worthy Norwegian-American cultural work which the board may from time to time recommend, and which the association as a whole may sanction."

Provision is made for associate members, sustaining members, life members, honorary members, patrons, donors, and benefactors.

A FINANCIAL SUMMARY

November, 1925, to December 31, 1949
Norwegian-American Historical Association

RECEIPTS

Membership dues	\$ 47,242.52
Life memberships	7,850.00
Cash contributions	23,192.91
Bequests	10,938.27
Ole Rynning Fund	185.51

\$ 89,409.21

Book Sales	\$ 10,268.44
Interest on investments	16,664.98
Net gain on sales of investments	2,910.55
Income not specified	41.06

\$ 29,885.03

\$119,294.24

DISBURSEMENTS

Publications	\$ 55,139.78
Research	14,780.06
Travel expenses	4,459.99
Secretary's office	14,074.61
Archives	1,262.65
Ole Rynning Fund	56.04

\$ 93,593.96

Balance \$ 25,700.28

A SPECIAL INVITATION TO THIS GROUP OF FOUNDERS

The Sponsoring Committee for the 25th Anniversary observance of the founding of The Norwegian-American Historical Association extends a very special invitation to be present on October 6, 1950, to those persons still living who were present at the organization meeting held at St. Olaf College October 6, 1925.

Many of the "founders" who signed the register of those present on October 6, 1925, have been called to their reward. The list of persons now living who were present on that historic occasion includes the following (subject to correction):

Dr. O. Boe, Decorah, Iowa.
 Dr. Theodore Blegen, St. Paul, Minn.
 Rev. Olaf Brevik, Albert Lea, Minn.
 Dr. G. M. Bruce, St. Paul, Minn.
 Prof. C. A. Clausen, Northfield, Minn.
 Prof. I. Dorrurn, Decorah, Iowa.
 Prof. P. M. Glasoe, Northfield, Minn.
 Rev. O. Glesne, Northfield, Minn.
 Rev. Ivar Havneros, Story City, Iowa.
 Prof. Martin Hegland, Northfield, Minn.
 Miss Gertrude Hilleboe, Northfield, Minn.
 S. H. Holstad, Minneapolis, Minn.
 Prof. J. A. Holvik, Moorhead, Minn.
 Prof. Karl T. Jacobson, Decorah, Iowa.
 Prof. Theodore Jorgenson, Northfield, Minn.
 Rev. Nils Kleven, Minneapolis, Minn.
 Rev. G. T. Lee, Minneapolis, Minn.
 Prof. G. J. Malmin, Parkland, Wash.
 Prof. C. A. Melby, Northfield, Minn.
 Prof. H. C. Nordlie, Moorhead, Minn.
 Prof. O. M. Norlie, Northfield, Minn.
 Birger Osland, Chicago, Ill.
 Rev. M. Rohne, Sedan, Minn.
 Prof. A. M. Rovelstad, Grand Forks, N. D.
 N. N. Ronning, Faribault, Minn.
 Herman Roe, Northfield, Minn.
 A. A. Rowberg, Northfield, Minn.
 Prof. J. Tanner, Forest City, Iowa.
 G. O. Teisberg, Minneapolis, Minn.
 Prof. J. Jørgen Thompson, Northfield, Minn.
 Rev. C. S. Thorpe, Minneapolis, Minn.
 Dr. O. A. Tingelstad, Decorah, Iowa.
 Dr. Carl M. Weswig, St. Paul, Minn.
 Mrs. Delia D. Ylvisaker, Fargo, N. D.

Dr. Joseph Schafer, Superintendent, State Historical Society of Wisconsin: I consider the work of the Norwegian-American Historical Association as profoundly significant. The social complex of our population will not be understood without a knowledge of the culture strains of which it is composed. The Norwegians are one of the most important of those strains and whatever can be done to elucidate the ideology with which they enrich American society will prove important toward the understanding of American history. I have followed the work of your Association with keen sympathetic interest, and have admired the scholarly thoroughness with which Dr. Blegen edits the material the Association puts out.

COLLECTING DOCUMENTS

[From "A Review and a Challenge," published in 1938, by the Norwegian-American Historical Association]

Quietly but persistently the Association has adhered to the program of its founders. The first task was to collect documents. Without documents, history obviously cannot be written. It was decided that the Archive should be housed in a building on the campus of St. Olaf College.

The Constitution states that the secretary of the executive board shall be the custodian of this depository. The responsibility accordingly fell upon the shoulders of Professor O. E. Rølvaag, who continued in office until his death in 1931.

The choice of secretary proved to be a wise one, for Rølvaag attacked the problem of collecting records with his customary enthusiasm. A master of literary expression, he was single-minded in his devotion to his "own people" in America.

One of the three incorporators of the Association, he had lent the whole weight of his personality and prestige to the creation and promotion of the organization. He now gave unstintingly of his dynamic energy to the task of corresponding, collecting, and classifying, and proved to be a collector and organizer of no mean ability.

To advance the general program of the Association and to stimulate interest in the work of collecting documents, he gave a course of lectures on pioneer history at St. Olaf College and published a collection of poems and stories dealing with immigrant life.

In the Archive itself he labored long hours, unselfishly creating a second monument to his life-work among the Norwegian-American people. Today the work begun by Rølvaag is being pushed with conscientious diligence by the present Secretary, Professor J. Jørgen Thompson, and the Curator of the Archive, Mr. Alf Houkom.

The student who desires to examine any phase of Norwegian-American history can ill afford to ignore this central collection. Here in a fire-proof room may be found bundles of manuscripts and letters; the literary works of writers like Rølvaag, Waldemar Ager, and Martha Ostenso; the writings of R. B. Anderson, H. R. Holand, J. A. Bergh, O. M. Norlie, Andreas Ueland, George T. Flom, and others; state census returns and the histories of counties; the publications of state historical societies; a large collection of church publications, including the reports of both the Norwegian Synod and the Norwegian-Lutheran Church.

Here, too, are files of *Skandinaven*, *Decorah-Posten*, *Samfundet*, *Fædrelandet*, *Nordmanden*, *Nordisk Tidende*, and *Minneapolis Tidende*, a storehouse of primary historical sources.

Professor Fritjof Anders in the Mississippi Valley Historical Review: The part played by the immigrants in building the United States has not been sufficiently stressed, and when other immigrant groups are able to present something as substantial as the Norwegian-American Historical Society, a basis will have been laid for a deeper understanding of the people of the United States.

NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

J. JÖRGEN THOMPSON

Dr. Kenneth Bjørk is spending his summer vacation in Alaska in search of material for his book on contributions made by Norwegian-Americans toward the settlement and development of the Pacific Coast. He hopes to have the manuscript ready by 1952.

* * *

The following letter has been resting for some time in our file marked NEWS LETTER material. The letter is stimulating and in view of our 25th anniversary now approaching, your Secretary has decided to share it with our membership. The writer of the letter is a member of long standing. He is a doctor of medicine in Fairmont, Minnesota. Would that all our members would be "wondering about the future of the Association." The letter:

DEAR JÖRG:

As we travel through life, and especially as we grow older, we wonder about this and that, most of it irrelevant possibly, but the more I think about The Norwegian-American Historical Association, the more I am overwhelmingly convinced that this is a great project, and it is also being 'dyrket' with the typical American tempo that is so stimulating.

Great men have done a beautiful amount of fine work in it, and I am not surprised that it is still going as strong as ever. All credit must be given to the founders who have been active since its beginning. But now I am wondering if the tempo of production will continue in the future as it has in the past.

In time, however, there will have to be changes as these founders pass on. Will this same spark of enthusiasm for achieving continue? That is the problem that I have been wondering about. If there should be that danger of lagging enthusiasm, how can this problem be met in the future?

I have been thinking about how the future of the Association might be helped to stay equally as active and productive as it has been to date. I may be out of order in worrying about it; there is possibly a fine plan on the books.

However, I have been wondering if the active members of the Association could not be asked for, say an additional sum of \$2 or more a year to be set aside for a scholarship every three years for a Doctorate at Oslo University.

I would imagine that at our several Church colleges, there would be young men that have been hired as instructors, with possibly master's degrees. These could compete for three year scholarships sponsored by The Norwegian-American Historical Association.

By the time one student had gotten his degree in three years, another promising young man would be found who could be sent on the same basis. Such trained men coming back to our institutions every three years should assure well trained men in carrying on the high grade work of the Association.

A scholarship of say \$1,500, or even \$2,000 a year,

should be ample for study and travel while abroad. I don't know how many members there are in the Association, but I have the feeling that these members would respond to such an idea to keep the good work humming in the future even as in the past. Well, Jörg, this is the sum and substance of my wonderings about the future of the Association.

Very sincerely yours,

J. J. HEIMARK.

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The following books written by members of the N.A.H.A. have come to your Secretary's desk:

Challenge by Miss Olga Overn, Grand Forks, North Dakota, published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri. Price \$2.50.

The Ikdal Family History by J. Hart Rosdail. Published by the Author.

How to Know the Wild Flowers by Alfred Stefferud. Henry Holt and Company, New York. Price \$2.00.

The Land Lies Open by Theodore C. Blegen, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. Price \$3.00.

Town 25 North, A short history of Alban township and the village of Rosholt, Portage County, Wisconsin, by Malcolm Rosholt. Published by the Author. Price \$5.00.

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A communication from Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, Managing Editor, reveals the good news that three new volumes are at present all at the printers. These volumes are:

THE GRO SWENSON LETTERS

AAGOT RAAEN'S REMINISCENCES, Depicting Pioneer Conditions in North Dakota, and STUDIES AND RECORDS, VOLUME XVI

It appears that possibly two of these publications will be in the hands of our members by the time we gather to celebrate our TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY.

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IN MEMORIAM

On Sunday, May 28th, death claimed one of the most faithful workers of the Association. Dr. C. Martin Alsager became a member shortly after the Association was organized. For twenty-four years he was constantly on the alert for new members. While we have not made a count of the members he obtained, we know that no other worker approached the number he enrolled. He invariably attended the Board meetings which have been held in Chicago. His advice and his counsel was sought and was always found to be sound and forward looking. The loss sustained in his passing is great.

Our Treasurer, Dr. Birger Osland, represented the Norwegian-American Historical Association at the funeral which was held in Bethel Lutheran church, Chicago.

Dr. George M. Stephenson, Professor of History, University of Minnesota: The successive volumes of the Publications of the Norwegian-American Historical Association have measured up to the highest standards of historical scholarship. No similar group can compare . . . in quality, in quantity, and in sustained interest. I offer my congratulations to editors, contributors, and members.