

The Norwegian-American Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota

NEWS



LETTER

From the Secretary's Office to the Association Members

NUMBER 44

Editor, LLOYD HUSTVEDT

FEBRUARY 1971

The NAHA in 1970

MEMBERSHIP

A total of 112 new members were added in 1970: associate 55; sustaining 29; life 8. The large number of new sustaining and life members is especially encouraging. Our remarkable gains were, however, nearly erased by the unusually high cancellation figure of 109: deceased 20; by request 11; failure to pay dues 78. Of those cancelled, 98 were associate members.

The current membership figure stands at 1,070: associate 725, sustaining 215, patron 11, life 132. When the 62 deceased life members are added, the total is 1,132. Since the founding of the NAHA in 1925, a total of 3,995 have subscribed to membership, but 898 of these dropped their membership after the first year.

BOOKS

Book sales in 1970 amounted to \$2,460.36. Our highest recorded sales were in 1963 with \$2,525.19. Volume 24 of *Studies* led the sales with 152 copies. *John A. Johnson: An Uncommon American* was second with 64 copies sold. A renewed interest in *Ole Rynning's True Account of America* (one of the first books published by the NAHA) is apparent through its sale of 40 copies. A total of 285 book orders were processed for a total sale of 697 books. Our total inventory of books in stock amounts to 7,797 copies. Of our 50 publications, 41 are still in print, but 6 of these have an inventory of less than 50.

ARCHIVES

Greatest interest in our archives was reflected in the area of written requests

for information, for research services, for translating Norwegian letters or articles, and for duplicating materials found in our files. The demands in this area exceeded our staff facilities.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Materials, both solicited and unsolicited, continue to find their way to the archives. To illustrate the variety of items received, a few donations can be mentioned. *In Those Days*, a manuscript (memoirs) prepared by Anders Ønvik Andresen, was donated by Mrs. Philip Rosenthal, Madison, Wisconsin. Mr. Andresen sailed for many years on the Great Lakes, rising to the rank of captain. F. A. Fetvedt of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, donated forty-five America-letters which date back to 1868. Mr. Fetvedt encouraged a relative in Norway to release these letters for deposit in the NAHA. The minutes and financial records of Vossalaget from 1909 to 1916 were transferred to our custody. Judge Helge Refsum of Bergen, Norway, a member of the Nobel Committee, has faithfully collected for us numerous newspaper articles on Norman Ernest Borlaug. Richard D. Hanson provided us with a copy of his Ph. D. dissertation, *An Analysis of Selected Choral Works of F. Melius Christiansen*. From the Quæstad family, we received the papers of Carl Quæstad, a Texas rancher.

RESEARCH

Approximately fifty persons engaged in major or minor research in our archives in 1970. Duane Lindberg, University of Minnesota, is working on the clergy on the frontier; Ernest W. Dewey,

University of Toledo, did research on Thorstein Veblen; Odd Lovoll is doing a comprehensive work on the *bygdelags*. The last should result in publication by the NAHA. Mrs. Murial Thompson, Mankato State College, and Rachel A. Haugrud, University of Utah, are both doing research on O. E. Rølvaag. Professor John T. Flanagan, University of Illinois, is preparing a biography of Theodore C. Blegen. Henriette Naeseth, Rock Island, Illinois, is working on Markus Thrane. Benjamin Botstein, the noted American folklorist, spent some time in the archives. John E. Peterson, St. Olaf College, is studying the history of congregations in the Faribault, Minnesota, area. Paul Rusten, a movie producer currently preparing films for Sons of Norway, has made two visits to the archives, filming a variety of our holdings. Among others doing research have been George T. Hagen, Maryland; Henrik Bartness, Trondheim, Norway; and Harald Tangjerd of Minneapolis.

BLEGEN FELLOWSHIP FUND

Approximately one-fourth of the members have been solicited for contributions to the Blegen Fellowship Fund. The month of January produced thirty-one donors for a total of \$518.50. Those contributing \$10.00 or more are listed below: Thor M. Andersen \$50.00, Carl W. Blegen \$225.00, Myron H. Floren \$10.00, Ronald Flugum \$10.00, O. I. Hertsgaard \$25.00, R. I. Jacobson \$38.00, Harold Larson \$10.00, David T. Nelson \$10.00, Enoch E. Peterson \$10.00, Karl F. Rolvaag \$25.00, Asbjorn E. Thomasen \$25.00.

MAY WE HAVE MORE OF THIS!

Mr. Osmund Orland of Aurora, Illinois, performed a remarkable feat recently: He enlisted eight new members for the Association in the course of two weeks.

Miss Annabelle Birkestol bought a life membership for the Stanwood Community Library, Stanwood, Washington. This gift was made in memory of Ole and Ingeborg Birkestol, Miss Birkestol's parents.

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS

Editor Kenneth O. Bjork reports that two publications are currently in the making. First to appear will be *A Voice of Protest: Norwegians in American Politics, 1890-1917*, by Jon Wefald. Jon Wefald, a former history professor at Gustavus Adolphus College, is currently Commissioner of Agriculture for the State of Minnesota. The second publication is *Norwegian-American Studies*, volume 25.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

For a number of years we have sought to promote the acceptance of the idea that all organizations consisting of Norwegian Americans — be they fraternal, social, or musical — should support the NAHA through institutional memberships. The NAHA has been and will continue to be the logical repository for the publications and records of these organizations. The NAHA is the grateful recipient of their papers and has often gone to great lengths to acquire them, but their processing and maintenance is a costly affair. It seems reasonable, therefore, that these organizations should share in the financial burden. It must be noted that a few *bygdelags*, Sons of Norway lodges, singing societies, and clubs are members, but many more remain outside.

The reason for nonmembership is hardly a deliberate unwillingness on the part of these organizations to support the Association. It is more a problem of reaching them in a personal way. Human nature being what it is, letters and brochures have in the past produced meager results. Lacking a field representative who might call on officers, we appeal to our members to urge any Norwegian-American organization within their reach to become an institutional member of the NAHA.

CORRECTION

The October *Newsletter* carried a list of contributors to the Theodore C. Blegen Fellowship Fund. G. Norman Wigeland, who contributed \$1,000, was erroneously named Eugene Wigeland in that list. We apologize.

IN MEMORIAM

Death has recently taken a heavy toll from the NAHA. David T. Nelson died in October, 1969 (see *Newsletter* No. 41). Andrew E. Wigeland, 76, died October 19, 1970. Lionel G. Thorsness, 75, died nine days later, October 29. Our President, Magnus Bjordndal, 71, died January 23, 1971. Beulah Folkedahl, our archivist, died January 26. Statements were sent to the families from the Executive Board. Excerpts from these statements are cited below. An article on the late Miss Beulah Folkedahl will appear in the next *Newsletter*.

ANDREW E. WIGELAND 1894-1970

In the death of Andrew E. Wigeland, the Norwegian-American Historical Association has suffered a loss that will be keenly felt in the years to come. For "Andy," as he was known by officers and colleagues, was a pillar of unusual strength and a dedicated supporter of its cultural program. First as Treasurer and later as Vice-President, he kept a firm hand on the financial rudder and helped guide the organization through two decades of rising prices and considerable uncertainty regarding the future.

Andy's interests, however, were in no sense limited to finances. He kept a sharp eye on membership rolls, gave vigorous support to various promotional projects, and lent unfailing encouragement to editorial undertakings. When, as became increasingly common in recent years, the Executive Board and Executive Committee held their meetings in Chicago, he often served as gracious host. He will be remembered for his gentle smile and for the air of quiet confidence that emanated from his person . . .

The officers and members of the Association thus note the passing of Andy Wigeland with a sadness eased by the certainty that his contributions will live on as an example to young and old alike.

LIONEL G. THORSNESS 1895-1970

The death of Lionel G. Thorsness removed from the Norwegian-American Historical Association a dedicated leader

and a warm friend. For more than twenty-five years, Lionel worked for the advancement of the Association's objectives, first as Vice President, later as President, and finally as Honorary Chairman. His hand was at the helm for nine years as President.

Lionel was more than an able leader. His jovial smile, his kind and concerned manner, his keen interest in his colleagues, and his sense of humor lent to the many meetings over which he presided a spirit of fellowship and good will.

We mourn the loss of Lionel G. Thorsness, but we mourn in a spirit of gratitude, for he leaves behind what he has built and the many he has encouraged and inspired.

MAGNUS BJORNDAL 1899-1971

News of Magnus Bjordndal's death came as a great blow to us in the Association who had come to depend on his leadership in a time of uncertainty and re-examination of goals. His understanding of the problems faced by a non-profit organization and of the challenges and opportunities it faces while contributing to American culture, has impressed all who have been associated with him in recent years. Named to the Executive Board in 1954, made Vice-President in 1958, and elected President in 1969, he was incapable of regarding his role as honorary in character

Mr. Bjordndal, as President of the Association, grappled with the tasks of launching the Theodore C. Blegen Fellowship Fund. He understood and was eager to promote the cause of adding to and improving our Archives of historical sources. He saw the need for a Chair of Immigration History as a means of stimulating and sustaining research in the various areas of Norwegian-American life, and for a Director's office that would carry on and greatly extend the day-by-day work of the organization. At the time of his death, he was actively engaged in an imaginative program to enlist financial support for the Association, thus revitalizing a co-operative effort in which scholars and leaders of the business and professional world have

made our Association a leading historical society.

Born in Ulsteinsvik in Sunnmøre, Norway, Magnus Bjordal, the oldest of ten children, came to America in 1923. His family had been teachers for four generations. Magnus Bjordal, however, chose engineering as his field, studying both in Norway and Germany before coming to the United States.

Holding several patents (more were to be added later), Mr. Bjordal founded Tech Laboratories in 1935 in Jersey City. Since its inception the corporation has produced complicated electrical equipment which is used in everything from ocean-going vessels to space exploration vehicles.

Mr. Bjordal had wide interests. He collected a large library and through the years supported causes he hoped would prosper, both in the United States and in his home community in Norway. He created Norway Foundation, worked hard for Norwegian Relief during World War II, and after the war helped many displaced persons begin a new life in this country. He was an energetic force in the Norwegian-American Technical Society and a contributor to that Society's journal.

Mr. Bjordal received the Order of St. Olaf, First Class, in 1962. He was an imposing figure, standing all of six-foot-six on a well-proportioned frame. His direct and forthright manner was mixed with a warm and boyish charm. He is survived in this country by his wife, Ruth Carolina, and by two brothers: Erling,

who has worked with Magnus in Tech Laboratories, and Arne, a professor of Dentistry at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

JEG VIL HEM ATT

Ingeborg Refling Hagen, the Norwegian poet, is less known among the Norwegian Americans than seems proper. Much of her poetry treats of the Norwegian immigrant in America and his nostalgia for the homeland. In recognition of Ingeborg Refling Hagen's 75th birthday, December 19, 1970, her immigrant poems were collected under one title, *Jeg vil hem att* (I want to go back home). This book was published by Sutting, 2313 Tangen, Oslo, Norway. Price 100 kroner.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Strange American Way contains the letters of Caja Munch from Wiota, Wisconsin, 1855-1859 and excerpts from Johan Storm Munch's autobiography, *Vita Mea*. The translation is by Helene and Peter A. Munch. A fifty page essay, "Social Class and Acculturation," by Peter A. Munch is also included. Peter A. Munch is Professor of Sociology at Southern Illinois University. Johan Storm Munch was a clergyman from Norway, who served congregations around Wiota, Wisconsin from 1855 to 1859. His wife Caja wrote letters home which will inform, charm, and amuse you. This book, containing 274 pages, is published by Southern Illinois University Press, and costs \$7.95.

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