

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

FIFTEEN YEARS OLD

Fifteen years ago on October 6, a representative group of men and women interested in the history of the Norwegian-Americans gathered at St. Olaf College and formed the Norwegian-American Historical Association. The spirit of earnestness and devotion to the cause that characterized that first meeting in 1925 has continued to prevail among the members and the officers of the association.

In spite of adverse conditions, the membership has been maintained at a high level. A very good beginning has been made in the gathering of books and materials for the historical and archival collection of the association. A permanent fund aggregating \$20,000 has been established and 21 volumes have been published during this short span of time.

During the past year, Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, our managing editor, has devoted his full time on a research fellowship for further study in the field of Norwegian migration. The result of his year's work will be Volume Two of *Norwegian Migration to America*. These two volumes give the story of the movements and adventures of our national group from the year 1825 up to the present.

As we look back over the fifteen years, we have reason to feel happy over our accomplishments, but much work is yet to be done. What will be accomplished during the next fifteen years will depend in a large way upon the support our present membership will give to the association. The next two months will be an unusually opportune time for the enlistment of new members. The coming of Dr. Blegen's book should offer an incentive for an effective increase in our membership roll.

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MANAGING EDITOR ASSUMES NEW DUTIES

We wish to extend to Dr. Blegen heartiest congratulations on his new appointment as Dean of the Graduate School in the University of Minnesota. We also wish to express congratulations to the University of Minnesota on being able to get a man so exceptionally well qualified to fill a position of such large importance to the University and to the State of Minnesota.

The following quotation from the University of Minnesota News Service will be of interest to all our readers:

"A man whose speciality is the study of Norwegian immigration to the United States, who is editor of the publications of the Norwegian-American Historical Association and was for many years superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society, is the new Dean of the Graduate School in the University of Minnesota—Dr. Theodore Blegen."

THE AMERICAN TRANSITION

The second volume of Dr. Theodore C. Blegen's *History of Norwegian Migration to America* is now in the hands of the printers. In his first book, published in 1931, our managing editor brought out the history of Norwegian migration from 1825 to 1860.

The coming book will classify under the same general heading: *Norwegian Migration to America*, but the author has here given attention to *The American Transition*.

There has been much interest shown in the volume that is in the making. Many inquiries have come both from members of the association and from others who are interested in the work our association is doing, asking when volume two will be available. Because of this interest, we feel impelled to give just a few suggestions of what this book will contain.

The American Transition will be a volume of 18 chapters and an appendix, and will run to about 600 pages. The book, as the title suggests, deals with the American transition of the Norwegian immigrants. It opens with a vivid and true picture of the emigrant crossing "From Old World to New." With this picture as a background, the author takes up all sides of the picture of Norwegian immigrant life—the ordeal the immigrant went through, the problem of language, pioneer folkways, everyday aspects of their life, relations with American churches, the emerging Norwegian Lutheran church, economic problems, schools, the press, and the spread of settlement far and wide. This is a big and interesting story which Dr. Blegen tells in his fascinating way. Toward the end he deals with such matters as "The Problem of Higher Education" and "Frontiers of Culture," relating everything very effectively to recent and present trends. All this sums up to a study of social, economic, and cultural evolution of the Norwegian-American group in America. From this point of view, many will undoubtedly pronounce this book much more interesting and vital than the first volume.

While the date for publication has not been set definitely, Dr. Blegen is bending every effort toward having the volume on the market by the latter part of November.

THE ARCHIVES

The plans for the new library building at St. Olaf College are rapidly taking shape with Lang and Raugland, Architects and Engineers, of Minneapolis, in charge. The Norwegian-American Historical Association will be given a prominent unit in this structure. There will be both working space for editorial, secretarial, and conference activities as well as storage space for the collections of the Association. According to the details which have been worked out so far, the Norwegian-American historical room on the third floor will have the dimensions 24 feet

wide by 46½ feet long. The decorative treatment of these quarters will be in harmony with the spirit and purpose of the organization's work. It is planned to build in a Norwegian "peis," or hearth, as one of the distinguishing features.

The whole tier of stacks on the same floor will be devoted to the housing of the material which has been collected by the Association and which is now located in the basement of the St. Olaf Music Hall. The approximate book capacity of the stacks on this level is above 30,000 volumes.

In the sub-basement space has been provided so as to equip a room for photographic reproduction. The size of this room has been tentatively set at a width of 14 feet and a length of 35 feet. This room will be available for the use of the Association as well as for the library. On the ground floor there will be a book storage vault in the stacks for rare and unusual items, large enough to care for 2,600 volumes.

If in the future the work of the Historical Association should require the services of a full-time technically trained worker, or workers, the Staff Room of the library has adequate room to absorb this addition to the working staff.

When the new St. Olaf Library is erected and completed, few youthful organizations in the country will be so well taken care of as will be the Norwegian-American Historical Association.

ALF HOUKOM, Librarian

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We Who Built America

Another evidence of how our publications are already influencing the writing of general American history is Carl Wittke's newly published book, *We Who Built America* (Prentice-Hall, 1939). The section on the Norwegians is based almost exclusively on the works of the Association, and in many other parts of the book reference is made to one or several of our volumes. It is the hope of all members that the ultimate interpretation of American history will bear the clear and unmistakable impress of the Association.

GREEN BAY ACTIVE

Mr. Anton Jarstad of Green Bay, Wisconsin, sends us the following interesting report:

The interest in Norwegian History is now beginning to appear locally in some of our Norwegian Settlements.

The old Norwegian settlement at Fort Howard, now Green Bay, Wisconsin, is again brought to mind by the formation of a Historical Society. In March, 1939, a committee consisting of Anton Jarstad, Martin Onstad, Olaf Olson, and Anton Nelson met and formally organized the Norwegian-American Historical Society of Brown County, Wisconsin. The first officers are Martin Onstad, president; Olaf Olson, secretary; and Anton Nelson, treasurer.

Three meetings have been held to date at which exceptional interest in the project has been evident. The active membership is now fifty, and these members have not been

solicited, and there is promise of further increases this year.

The feature program of the year was open to the public and was held last February in the new Tank School Auditorium. Besides Norwegian songs and music the principal speaker was Hjalmar R. Holand, a noted writer and speaker on Norwegian history. This public program is to be an annual project.

Last May an exhibition of Norwegian historical articles was held at the public museum. Several hundred articles were exhibited and the display was visited by large numbers of interested citizens. This initial exhibit was opened May 5, and was featured by an address by Miss Helga Haltug, who gave a description of Norway, taken from her notes on her trip to Norway a year ago. Folk songs and dances were given by a group of children, and Mrs. Harry Jensen gave an exhibition of spinning yarn on a wheel brought from Norway by her grandmother over 70 years ago.

New Members Since March 1, 1940

SUSTAINING

M. S. Grytbak, St. Paul, Minnesota
Gunnar Gundersen, LaCrosse, Wisconsin
P. O. Lieberg, Pasadena, California

ASSOCIATE

Peter G. Andersen, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Henry Arneson, Lake City, Minnesota
Richard Beck, Grand Forks, North Dakota
James O. Berdahl, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
M. H. Brastad, Roseau, Minnesota
Anders Bull, Forest Hills, New York
Marvin Clausen, Chicago, Illinois
Thor Damhaug, Brooklyn, New York
Christian Grimsrud, Santa Monica, California
Andrew K. Frolich, Louisville, Nebraska
A. I. Johnson, Fargo, North Dakota
Olaf B. Johnson, New Richland, Minnesota
Hugo Kolstad, St. Paul, Minnesota
Johannes Lie, St. Paul, Minnesota
Jonas Lien, Port Washington, New York
Einar Medal, Brooklyn, New York
Thos. M. Matthews, Athens, Texas
Edith C. Nelson, Chicago, Illinois
Brynjolf Pederson, Bergen, Norway
Harlan O. Peterson, Viking, Minnesota
Mrs. Tobias Reep, Northfield, Minnesota
R. N. Ristad, Nile Center, Illinois
O. M. Rognan, St. Paul, Minnesota
Marie Rorem, Chicago, Illinois
E. Sonnichsen, Los Angeles, California
Ole Stangeland, Chicago, Illinois
H. Benjamin Tetlie, Big Timber, Montana
Earl B. Torland, Oak Park, Illinois

GREVSTAD PAPERS

Through the efforts of Dr. Einar Haugen, a member of our editorial staff, the association has received a considerable portion of the papers left by the late editor of *Skandinaven*, N. A. Grevstad. There has not been time to make a study of the collection, so we are not in a position to give information about the contents.