

# The Norwegian-American Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota

*From the Secretary's Office to the Association Members*



NUMBER 89

Editor, LLOYD HUSTVEDT

JULY 1994

## THE SOGNDAL SEMINAR

We have called attention in former newsletters to the festivities that will take place throughout Sogn og Fjordane that recognize the 150th anniversary of emigration to America from that region. Sixty persons from seven districts (Aurland, Balestrand, Leikanger, Lærdal, Sogndal, Vik and Aardal) left Bergen on the sailing vessel *Juno* on May 8, 1844. The year 1844 apparently holds true as a beginning date for all districts except Vik. Five left from that region in 1839. Some 43,000 more were destined to follow from an area that had a population of 90,000 in 1910.

Of special interest to us is the seminar to be held at Sogndal, June 27-30, sponsored by NAHA-Norway. This is the fifth seminar that this chapter has sponsored since 1984.

### The Program

The complete program is not available to us but we can call attention to portions of it. The following people from the States will participate: Todd W. Nichol, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, and NAHA board member, will lecture on "Reconsidering Norwegian-American Church History." Jon Gjerde, University of California, Berkeley, will discuss "West Coast Emigration and Rural Midwestern Culture." Anne M. Legreid, University of Missouri, will read a paper, "Embraced by Fields of Boulders: Family, Landscape, and Economy in Eidfjord, Hardanger, in the Aftermath of Mass Migration." Odd S. Lovoll, NAHA editor, will read a paper entitled "Better Than a Visit to the Old Country: Stevne of the Sognelag in America."

Scholars from Norway include Rasmus Sunde and Gunnar Urtegard who will treat

topics related to Sogn. Orm Øverland will reconsider America letters.

### Vårt Land is Pleased

An article in *Vårt Land*, May 26, 1994, called attention to a strong church interest in the forthcoming seminar. Besides Todd Nichol's lecture there will be a study by David Mauk about church life in Brooklyn; Henrik Bredmose Simonsen will address Danish-American church history; Brynjar Haraldsø will talk on the Norwegian Synod and the slavery issue; finally, Maj Lunde will analyze the church records of a Norwegian congregation in Calumet, Michigan. Everything points to an excellent conference. We assume that the proceedings will be published.

### Coming Soon

*Material Culture and People's Art Among the Norwegians in America*, edited and compiled by Marion Nelson, is expected to arrive from the printers around mid-July. Preparations are being made so that distribution can begin immediately. The book, more expensive to produce than most of our books because of page size and illustrations, will retail for \$30. Should members have undergone a change of address, do let us know. The post office does not forward books. It sends them back, charging postage both ways. For this book that would come to \$4.00.

Our editor Odd S. Lovoll, informs us that the biography of Knute Nelson will come about in the spring of 1995. This work was started by Millard Gieske who died before he finished. Steven Keillor is completing the task. Volume 34 of *Studies* will follow the biography.

## Norwegian-American Essays

The proceedings (selected) of the Fourth Norwegian-American Studies Seminar held at Voss, Norway, in August, 1992, has been published under the title *Norwegian-American Essays*. It was published jointly by NAHA-Norway (Oslo), the Norwegian Emigrant Museum (Hamar) and the Norwegian Emigration Center (Stavanger). The work was edited by Knut Djupedal, Øyvind Gulliksen, Ingeborg Kongslie, David Mauk, Hans Storhaug and Dina Tølfesby.

The paperbound, 136-page volume contains nine articles by as many authors. It is dedicated to Lloyd Hustvedt. A speech given by Siri Hustvedt on her father's 70th birthday is included. It was not a part of the Voss conference.

The book falls outside of the regular NAHA publication program and will not be distributed to the members. NAHA-Norway has sent us 40 copies and promises to send more should there be a need. The cost is \$15, including postage.

## Gerhard Brandt Naeseth 1913-1994

Word just arrived that Gerhard Naeseth died on Friday, June 10, in Madison, Wisconsin, 81 years old. No effort will be made here to do justice to his career. He was an Associate Director of the Library at the University of Wisconsin. He retired in 1978, after thirty years of service. But, he was also a genealogist, a true professional, and certainly the most outstanding one among the Norwegian Americans.

When he retired in 1978 he took over the Vesterheim Genealogical Center which he first ran from his home and later from 415 West Main street, Madison, when the center acquired its own building. He also embarked on a project to document the earliest Norwegian immigrants to arrive on our shores. His first volume was completed not long ago and his unfinished work is fortunately on file and can be continued by others. By the very nature of his work so much was stored in his mind. We might say that a library burned down when he died.

## Who Is Paul Revere, Anyway?

You may have heard about Geir Petter Pettersen, the Oslo policeman, who left Brooklyn for Seattle on horseback on May 17. For a time he will follow routes taken by Cleng Peerson. Riding with him is Divo Martini of the New York City mounted police. They plan to be in Decorah in time for the Nordic Fest, July 29 and 30. Sometime later they will be paying their respects to the NAHA. From here the trek is ever westward. They plan to reach Seattle during Leif Eriksson Day, October 9.

A Norwegian television team will film Pettersen's journey for a three-part series. The program, which will offer a portrait of the northern portion of the United States, will focus on the Norwegian-American scene. Fortunately the secretary of the NAHA grew up on a farm. He is looking into guest accommodations for two travel-weary horses.

## *Grass of the Earth Lives On*

The Minnesota Historical Society has just reprinted *Grass of the Earth* by Aagot Raaen, a work the NAHA published in 1950. It proved to be popular beyond expectations and was soon out-of-print. The Arno Press also reprinted this book. Available through MHS, 345 Kellogg Blvd. West, Saint Paul, MN 55102. \$12.50 plus \$2.50 postage.

## Sogndal Examines Its Own Emigration

Not all useful migration studies are published by the NAHA. Rasmus Sunde has recently produced *Ei utvandrarsoge frå Sogndal* under the sponsorship of Sogndal kommune. Careful scholarship undergirds this 60 page study which is presented in a popular story-telling tone. The Sogndal community saw 3,190 of its citizens leave for America from 1844 to 1924. Sogndal had a population of about 4,000 in 1865. Despite a sharp focus, Sunde keeps a steady eye on the larger migration movement, how it began in other areas, and how it, like a contagion, spread from region to region.

## New Board Members

Tom Fjelde and O. Jay Tomson have been introduced in an earlier newsletter. Five remain to be mentioned: George E. Aker, Nancy Gossell, Karin LaFollette Larson, John R. Tunheim and Brian Rude. A brief statement about the first three cited above is given below. Tunheim and Rude will be mentioned in the next issue.

### George E. Aker

George E. Aker lives in Northfield, Minnesota, where he is Vice President of College Relations at St. Olaf College. He is a graduate of the college he now serves. Before coming to St. Olaf he was engaged in commercial banking for 20 years in Wisconsin and Nevada, holding degrees in finance and banking from the University of Chicago and Rutgers University. He was the first treasurer of the new Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and president of its Investment Fund. His talents are many. More important, perhaps, is the fact that they are near at hand.

### Nancy Gossell

Nancy Gossell lives in Minneapolis and is the Director of Human Resources for Target Stores. She graduated summa cum

laude from Luther College with majors in history and political science. After earning her Juris Doctor degree from the University of Wisconsin, she served as an attorney for the National Labor Relations Board. She chairs the benefits sub-committee of the National Retail Federation and is a member of the National Business Advisory Council for Good Will Industries of America. Beyond all this she has studied and traveled in Norway.

### Karin LaFollette Larson

Karin LaFollette Larson lives in Seattle and is the president and owner of The Travel Exchange of Seattle. She is a native of Bergen, Norway, where she for a time worked for the Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities at the University of Berge. After coming to Seattle in 1965 she has been active in a number of Norwegian American cultural enterprises such as the Nordic Heritage Museum in Seattle and the Grieg Jubilaem Committee. She is currently serving a second term as president of the Norwegian-American Chamber of Commerce (Seattle chapter) and is a long time member of its Board of Directors.

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## How Would You Respond?

Dear Administrator:

I am writing to see if you can assist me in identifying the sacred landscapes of Norway that represent its myth and archetypal symbolism's . . . I want to write and produce a photographic-video documentary about the sacredness of Norway's culture and natural landscape. Your guidance would be greatly appreciated in response to my inquiry.

Sincerely, . . .

The above letter was dated February 28, 1994. The first sentence of our response went as follows: "We fear that you may be asking for more than we can give." Now you can take it from there.

## Random News

- Received from Bonnie Johnson, her *Scandinavians in Montana: An Annotated Bibliography*. Unbound typescript reproduction, 25 pages, 1992.

- Received from Pastor Rolf T. Storlie, his *History of the Storlie Family in America*. Paperbound, 145 pages, Cogswell, North Dakota, 1966. Members of the Storlie family began to emigrate from Hallingdal, Norway, in 1852, settling first in Wisconsin and later near Spring Grove, Minnesota.

- Received from Simon Innvær, *Mindy: Farmer's Daughter 1929-1947, Farmer's Wife 1973-1992*, a paperbound autobiography by Mildred Gaasland, Glenwood, Minnesota, 1944, 167 pages. The author, born to Norwegian parents in Ottertail county in 1929, portrays with honesty and affection farm life in western Minnesota, from childhood and on.

- Received from Ranveig and Olav Bakke,

*Snowshoe Thompson* by Jon Haukaas, a hardcover book of 205 pages published by Fjell-Ljom Ungdomslan, 1993. This is, to be sure, the most extensive treatment to date of John A. "Snowshoe" Thompson, who attained fame by carrying mail over the Sierras on skis.

- The Hardanger Fiddle Association of America is holding its second annual Scandinavian Fiddle Contest, Friday, July 15, 1994, 7:00 p.m. at Willmar, Minnesota.

- Received from Agnes and Don Brohaugh, their *The Brohaugs in America*. Typescript reproduction, paperbound, photos, maps, index, 117 pages, 1985. Ole Brohaugh (Brøhaug), a widower, left Eidsvold, Norway, with eight children in 1869 and settled in Pierce county, Wisconsin.

- Received from Arnold Berwick his *Abraham Lincoln of the Sea: A Biography of Andrew Furuseth*, hardcover, 158 pages, Odin Press, Santa Cruz, California, 1993.

Berwick, a retired attorney, saw Furuseth in a San Francisco hospital at age 14 in 1934. Furuseth was recovering from a heart attack. Although he had little more than a glimpse of the famous labor leader, Berwick never forgot the experience.

- Received from Paul Hampton Morrill, *Peter Bassoe, M.D.: A Biography with Letters*. Paperbound, 252 pages, 1993. Peter Bassoe, (1874-1945) left Telemark, Norway, in 1893, graduated from a Chicago medical college in 1897, began to teach at Rush Medical College and later headed the neurology department at that college. This is a well-written account of a gifted, gentle and useful man.

- Received from Arline Haugen Hales her *The Hovda-Lerohl Saga*. Spiralbound, typescript reproduction, 127 pages, 1993. Christopher Hovda and Anne Lerohl came from Vang in Valdres, Norway, and settled in Renville county, Minnesota, in 1883.

- Received from Bernice Busse, *Journal of Harry Gilbertson 1876-1881*. Spiralbound, typed transcription, 52 pages. The diary, written in the English language, has much to tell about sickness, death and sorrow. Four younger sisters died in 1876 alone and more family

members were to follow. The diary reveals a devout and good person who expressed his feelings and reflected on problems of life. Unfortunately the diary came to an end when this Manitowoc, Wisconsin farmer became 29 years old.

- Received from Everett Bunes and Kay Breeding Netz, *The Oksness Book*, by Kay Netz. Members of the Oksness family, who came from Verdal, Norway, began to settle in western Minnesota in 1882. Photos, maps, charts, index, 341 pages. This handsomely bound history is a superb piece of work.

- Our Executive Board member, John Tunheim, has become one of four members of a new commission whose task is to ensure maximum public disclosure of still-secret or yet-to-be identified documents related to the Kennedy assassination. The panel will screen thousands of CIA and FBI files never made public. Tunheim is Minnesota's chief deputy attorney general.

- Received from Lyle E. Siverson, his *Erik and Stina, Their Family Portrait*. Hardcover looseleaf, photos and illustrations, 300 pages, 1994. This is a companion volume to *Erik and Stina: The Ties that Bind*, 1991.

Erik Nordtomme Siverson left Sør Trøndelag in 1867 at age 15, settled first near Watson, Minnesota, and moved later to Milan. He married Stina, who came from Sweden, in 1879. Erik was farmer, businessman and school-teacher. They had twelve children and all received a college education.

- We like it when persons say nice things about the NAHA: "We do appreciate all your work—I don't see how you can exist on salaries totalling \$16,000! We enjoy the books you print and especially the most recent one, *New Lands, New Lives*, which touched so many lives. With all good wishes, Arline Haugen Hales." We also like it when members read our financial statements.

- Received from Neil R. Morem his *Morem Saga*. Typescript reproduction, maps, photos, unbound 11 pages. Emigration from the Mårheim farm units in Telemark dates back to the early Muskego settlement.

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