

The Norwegian-American
Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota



From the Secretary's Office to the Association Members

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Editor, LLOYD HUSTVEDT

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SECRETARY'S REPORT, 1996

The statement cited below served as an introduction for a sequence of more detailed reports submitted by the secretary at the February executive committee meeting. The financial statement alluded to will be carried in our next newsletter. Copies of the detailed reports are available to members upon request.

Membership

We continue to set new records on varied fronts. Our membership total rose to 1,822. We recruited 103, but lost 73 for a net gain of 30. Out of 126 members who transferred, 75 elected a higher membership category. We now have 125 patron members. Only a few years ago there were only three or four. Forty percent are life members. While this ratio provides guaranteed stability, it could mean economic hardship during periods of low investment yields. This past year a \$250 life member provided the NAHA with an investment return of \$20. If we take into account clerical convenience and the permanent character of life memberships, they have equated well these past two years with the income provided by an associate member. A number of life members respond to our annual solicitation for gifts. In so doing they voluntarily lift the investment value of their life membership since their gifts as well as their dues enter the same endowment fund.

Books

Book sales rose to a new level, \$8,701, due in part to the fact that our more recent publications command higher retail prices than was true earlier. Our unsold stock shows 54 titles still in print with 25 of these being *Studies*. Our total stock comes to 7,242 volumes. The inventory is far from balanced, but the peaks are being pared down by our practice of awarding high

inventory books as premiums to members who make gifts of \$20 or more. Twenty-seven volumes have an inventory of less than 100 copies.

Archives

Our archives remain a lively place. At times to such a degree that all staff members are involved in helping visitors. Our *Guide to Manuscripts Collections* was published in 1975. Many collections have been added since that date making the *Guide* incomplete. An updated edition needs to be published. If and when this is done, income from the Fosholt-Hyde Fund would appropriately finance the venture. If the new guide is distributed to our members, current funds should care for shipping costs.

Finance

The financial picture for 1996 must be rated satisfactory. Current Fund income matched expenses for the first time in many years, helped by the transfer of \$3,000 each from the Bjork and Fosholt Funds. Gifts and bequests amounted to more than \$34,000, with nearly \$15,000 of this amount directed to the Rølvaag Fund. When life membership income and capital gains are added, the Rølvaag Fund increased by \$30,900. Our total endowment assets increased by \$88,666, a wee bit less than 8 percent. As the financial statement will reveal, our endowment funds now total \$1,115,400. Our Current Fund showed a balance of \$41,000. As is true in the past,

we need to continue to direct undesignated gifts to the Rølvaag Fund. Special appeals in the name of that fund would also be in order. The problem of meeting operational costs decreases as this fund builds to higher levels. All in all, it has been a good year.

Staff

There are human assets that must not be forgotten. Ruth Crane has been with us for more than ten years. Accuracy, efficiency, speed, and integrity have characterized her person and her work down through time. We proclaim our gratitude. The archives thrive under Forrest Brown's management. He has attained finger-tip knowledge of its content and continues to streamline its organization. His warm and unassuming manner in dealing with visitors is winning friends for the NAHA in ways not anticipated. Odd Lovoll and Mary Hove ply their editorial duties just across the hall from us. They do this with unflinching regularity and with meticulous precision. And, in due time another manuscript is ready for publication.

Semmingsen Seminar

The Department of History at the University of Oslo sponsored an "Ingrid Semmingsen Memorial Seminar" March 13-14. The seminar, arranged by Odd S. Lovoll, presented a total of 16 papers by as many readers, all within the area of scholarship advanced by the late Dr. Semmingsen.

We select at random some of the topics treated so as to provide a flavor of the conference. Einar Niemi reviewed the advances made in migration studies since Semmingsen; our own Todd Nichol discussed social views found in Norwegian-American church history; Terje Joranger looked at settlement patterns; Gudmund Stang tracked Norwegian engineers who found careers away from home; David Mauk reported on the Norwegian colony in Brooklyn; Orm Øverland's paper "Home-making Myths" explored what immigrants did to establish special rights to America; and Dina Tolsby (Nordmanns-Forbundet) closed the conference with a discussion of

plans for recognizing the 175th anniversary of Norwegian migration in the year 2000.

The proceedings of the seminar will be published in Norway. Dr. Lovoll has been invited to plan another. According to Lovoll, the importance of this seminar rested in making known to Norwegian historians in general how extensive migration studies have become in Norway, due largely to the ground-breaking work done by Ingrid Semmingsen.

Looking for Role Models?

We have a few. Sanford Fosholt, together with his wife Wilma, laid the foundations for our archives fund with a gift of \$50,000 in 1985. In December, 1996, he subscribed to life memberships for four children, thereby claiming records on two fronts.

Along came Brit Aabakken Peterson a month later and subscribed to ten — we repeat ten — life memberships for friends and relatives. Brit Peterson, who lives in Virginia, recently visited Brynhild Rowberg in Northfield and made her first visit to the archives. She was in the States when the Germans invaded Norway in 1940. This led to her marriage to her late American-born husband, an engineer. Brit Peterson is a lively person, alert, informed and full of good humor.

Freda Hovden offers a different profile. She became a member of the NAHA in 1958. For 39 years she has supplemented her dues with voluntary gifts, none at any one time large enough to stir special attention. Yet, her membership card attests to a gift accumulation exceeding \$2,000. A letter accompanied her latest gift. She can no longer read the publications we send her. She asked that we terminate her membership and thanked the NAHA for giving her reasons to be proud of being a Norwegian American. We will not send her books she cannot read, but her membership will remain intact.

Today we salute the Fosholts, Brit Aabakken Peterson and Freda Hovden.

Help from a Neighbor

Sons of Norway *Viking*, March, 1997, featured the NAHA archives in an article entitled "Echoes of the Past," by Anne Gillespie Lewis. Her compact three-page article was supported with color photos by Don Marshall. The author cited from documents that she had discovered while browsing our collections for a sampling of its contents.

We are grateful to Anne Gillespie Lewis and to the *Viking*. Our archives deserve to be better known in the Norwegian-American community. Since the *Viking* has 80,000 readers, this may help.

Random News

- Received from Albert O. Grender five separate titles, of which four were compiled by Grender: *The Grinder Family: Ancestors and Descendants*, 252 pages, 1995; *The Mattson Family*, 215 pages, 1994; *The Anderson Family*, 160 pages, 1988; *Oisæther: Øimoen, Olson and Sather Family Album*, by Ethel Skalet and Otto Oimoen, 116 pages.

- *Civil War Diary of Hans Olson Grinder*, photos, maps, and commentary by Albert Grender, 99 pages, 1997. Grinder enlisted in 1861 and re-enlisted in 1864, joining the 12th Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment, a part of the Army of Tennessee, which under the command of General Sherman made the historic march to the sea. Corporal Grinder, moving from one battle scene to another, seems to have led a charmed life. When the war was over he returned to Wisconsin.

- Received from Snøhetta forlag (N-2625 Lesja, Norway), *Fra Heidal til Decorah, Veien jeg gikk*, an autobiography by Kristian Prestgaard, edited by Gudmund Harildstad and published by NAHA Norway, 1996. Kr. 168. Based on a manuscript in the NAHA archives. Norwegian born and educated, Prestgaard visited the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago and never returned. He became associate editor of *Decorah Posten* in 1898 and chief editor in 1923. He wrote about the NAHA in 1944: "Since its founding 19 years ago the NAHA

has proved to be the most beneficial, solid and durable organization ever founded in Norwegian America. It has produced a publication each year and each has served as a chapter in the larger saga about Norwegian migration to America." (Translated by the Newsletter editor.) Fortunately his assessment still stands after 72 years.

- Received from Kathleen Stokker her *Folklore Fights the Nazis: Humor in Occupied Norway, 1940-1945*, University of Wisconsin Press, 273 pages, \$17.95. A study which among many other things reveals how humor can be an effective weapon in psychological warfare.

- Received from Alan C. Tjeltveit *The Lærdal Family History* (translated by Jens Anker). The history traces ten generations back to the early 1500s. Hardcover, 236 pages, 1996.

- In his *Scandinavian World* (published by the North American Heritage Press, Minot, North Dakota, 1988), Arland Fiske devotes a chapter (three pages) to the NAHA. A belated thank you.

- Received from Patricia L. Hampton How I happened to *Become an American*, written by her mother Helen Louise Solem Ulvestad while a student at St. Olaf College.

- Received from John Laird *Ofstedahl Family*, unbound manuscript of 32 pages. The Ofstedahls left Voss, Norway, in the 1860s, settling in Goodhue county, Minnesota. Many of their children later moved to the Red River Valley.

- Received from Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler *The Scandinavian American Family Album*, Oxford University Press, 1996, hardcover, 128 pages. Designed for school use and one of many volumes treating ethnic elements in America.

- Received from Anne Hvenekilde her *Hvad gjør vi med arven*, a study of texts and readers used for Norwegian language instruction in America. A doctoral dissertation published by the Scandinavian University Press, 435 pages, 1996. A thorough, precise and fascinating examination of the teaching material that was in use among the immigrants and of the peda-

gological and philosophical principles that were in force. For an English chapter from his work see volume 34 of *Norwegian-American Studies*, "Readers for Our Norwegian American Schools," page 135. Hvenekilde did much of her research at the NAHA archives.

- Received from Lloyd Anderson *My Story* by Anne Berge Bygland, a personal account of homesteading near Niobrara, Nebraska, in 1890. Typescript manuscript, 13 pages. Several family letters from 1890 are included. Because our archives contain at best limited sources on Nebraska settlement this well-written account telling of sickness, death, tornadoes, human endurance and quiet heroism makes a valuable addition to our holdings.

- Received from Gary T. Johnson *Loving Hands and Kind Hearts: One Hundred Years of the Norwegian Old People's Home Society and Norwood Park Home* (Chicago) by Anne Lunde, a handsomely bound book of 110 pages, 1995.

- Received from Alfred Stimes *Long Prairie: Ei Sognebygdi Amerika* by Rasmus Sunde and a translation of this work by Bjarne Breilid. Long Prairie, Boone county in northern Illinois, is the site of early Norwegian settlements.

- Received from Michael Freidel *Naevra-Erickson: A Sigdal Family* by Rolf H. Erickson and Audry Berner White, hardcover, 592 pages, 1996. A finer piece of bookmaking can hardly be visualized. Rolf Erickson, our late vice president, died in 1992. His co-author died in 1985, so neither lived to see their story in published form. Available through Michael Freidel, 245 South Segoe Road, Madison, Wisconsin,

53705. \$36 includes postage and handling.

- Our e-mail address is <naha@stolaf.edu>. Our world wide web site address is <<http://www.stolaf.edu/other/naha.html>>.

- Received *Utvandrings Register 1836-1925 for Hordaland*, 2 vols. 430 pages. The entries appear in alphabetical order by first, patronymic, and place names. For example, there are 1120 Oles. Ole Adamson Hjøлма is among the first while Ole Øysteinson Hoiland appears last. As valuable as these lists are, they lack a foreward, an introduction, or any commentary on the sources used to prepare the list. A casual check reveals that the list is incomplete. In one instance a seven-year-old daughter is mentioned, but not her parents nor her known older siblings.

- Received from Ruth Hanold Crane *Wonderland of the Herring Chokers*, a descriptive account of gill-net herring fishing on Lake Superior in the early 1900s, by Ted Tofte, the son of a herring fisherman. The well-written account tells not only of method and technique but also of the hardships and risks that accompanied the occupation. 17 pages, 1982.

- Received from Harriet A. Madson her *Celebrating 150 years in Amerika: The Story of the Rye-Mehus-Svensrud-Johan Paulson Family*, hardcover, maps, photos, charts, index, 517 pages. These families settled in Wisconsin, Iowa, and in the Dakota Territory.

- Received from George H. Hardy *The Family History of Daniel Patrick Hardy*. Typescript, 69 pages of narrative, 30 pages of exhibits and family tree, 1996.

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