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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION | SPRING 2023 VOLUME 187



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2022
ANNUAL
REPORT



OLE AND BESS

The entrepreneurial couple behind Evinrude outboard motors

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MILWAUKEE



WHERE WE'RE HEADED

One of the most rewarding aspects of my work at NAHA is to help plan for the future. NAHA leadership does this formally every three years, when we develop our strategic plan. Following a strategic plan helps us prioritize the ways we use our energy and resources.

Last year, the staff and board engaged in the strategic planning process together. We started by revisiting our mission and vision statements, which express our purpose as an organization. While our work of locating, collecting, preserving, and interpreting the Norwegian-American experience will continue, we will do that work with a broader, more inclusive mission and vision:

Our Mission—To inspire connections to Norwegian-American experiences through discovery, scholarship, and stewardship;

Our Vision—To be the leader in the stewardship of Norwegian-American stories and experiences, relevant to other immigrant cultures, and in recognition of cross-cultural encounters.



In other words, we will continually improve our service to our traditional audiences, and at the same time serve as a resource for those studying the larger stories of human migration, including Norwegian-American contact with other ethnic and cultural groups.

Next, we identified five values that will guide our work and decisions in the next three years:

Integrity—We value authenticity and accuracy as we aim to tell the full story of Norwegian-American experiences through evidence-based scholarship and information;

Inclusivity—We aspire to be a welcoming community, where all people are invited in with respect for their interests, contributions, and relationships;

Accessibility—We seek to be accessible to people of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, abilities, and interests;

Legacy—We steward Norwegian-American experiences out of respect for the past and for the benefit of generations to come;

Relevance—We seek to inspire new generations by connecting Norwegian-American stories to today's immigrant experiences.

How will all of this inform our daily work? Under our strategic plan, NAHA will continue caring for our archival collections. We will grow our archives endowment, so we can care for these priceless materials long into the future. As we transition to our new facility, we will promote scholarship, especially through the use of our collections, and encourage others to engage with our association. The next three years will bring exciting opportunities for collaboration as we plan for the centennial of NAHA and the bicentennial of organized Norwegian migration in 2025.

Thank you for your continued engagement and support as we look to bright days ahead!

Amy Boxrud, Executive Director

on the cover

This 1913 advertising image captured what the Evinrudes wanted people to know about their outboard motors: They were compact and so easy to use that anyone could enjoy the freedom of being out on the water, no heavy rowing required.

in brief

NEW ARCHIVES VAULT COMPLETED

During her visit to Minnesota last fall, Her Majesty Queen Sonja of Norway officially opened the long-awaited new home for the NAHA archives. What began as a NAHA campaign to add climate control to our own storage facility grew into a new state-of-the-art vault and special collections facility that will be shared with the St. Olaf College archives and rare books collection. Funds originally raised by NAHA for this project met the requirements to earn matching funds in the form of an Infrastructure Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The new vault provides both climate control and improved storage and handling capabilities. Stable temperature and humidity are crucial, since fluctuations in them are the greatest cause of damage in archival materials. Items in the new vault will be in a protective climate, and the archival boxes we use will be an added layer of protection, with each container creating an even more stable micro-climate for the materials inside.

Archival donations sometimes come to us from less-than-ideal environments. In the past, opening boxes with mold or insect infestations risked contaminating other collections. Now a separate room near the loading dock will hold newly donated materials, where they can be inspected and segregated in freezers, if needed, until they can be treated by a conservator. There's new work space for conservation in an adjoining room equipped with a special exhaust system.

The new facility will offer more than just a safe environment for valuable archival materials. The second phase of the project, scheduled to begin this summer, will create a new reading room, a dedicated classroom, exhibit spaces, staff offices, and even more workspaces for processing, preserving, and digitizing materials.



Her Majesty Queen Sonja of Norway and St. Olaf College President David Anderson cut the ribbon for the vault in October 2022. The new facility is shared by NAHA, the St. Olaf College archives, and the Rølvaag Library's special collections.

SAFE STORAGE

5,317
Size in square feet

43,103
Capacity in cubic feet

12,000
Linear feet of compact shelving

6
Air changes per hour

68
Constant temperature in degrees F

42
Percent constant humidity



Save the Date: Spring Member Meetup

Plan to join us at 10 a.m. Central Time, Saturday, May 6. Our virtual event will focus on turning genealogical research into meaningful family stories, and our featured speaker will be author, historian, and writing instructor Rachel Hanel. An associate professor at Minnesota State University, Mankato, she specializes in all forms of creative nonfiction.

For more information, watch our website (naha.stolaf.edu), our e-newsletter, and Facebook, where registration details will be available by April 15.



REMEMBERING LEE ROKKE

Leona “Lee” Rokke, 92, of Savage, Minnesota, passed away on February 16, 2023. A dedicated NAHA volunteer for more than 20 years, Rokke’s cataloging and indexing made the collections discoverable for fellow researchers.

Leona Marie Eng was born in Bagley, Minnesota, in 1930. She graduated with honors from Bagley High School and Augsburg College, where she majored in history and philosophy. Over a series of moves with her family, she held jobs including corporate librarian, scrivener for a title company, and elementary school teacher.

Rokke was an accomplished genealogist and conducted seminars to teach others how to trace their family roots. She served as the vice president of the Sigdalslag, trustee for the Vesterheim museum, and long-time newsletter editor for the Norwegian-American Genealogical Association. In 2004, she was awarded the Medal of St. Olav for her outstanding work spreading information about Norway abroad and strengthening bonds between expatriate Norwegians and their home country.

“I know from my personal experience what a massive contribution she made at NAHA while she was there,” writes a fellow NAHA volunteer of many years, Dale Haaland. Rokke created an index with more than 56,000 entries, describing places and names in the collections. Her work became known as the Rokke Name Index. “I can best describe it as if the lights were turned on in the stacks at NAHA,” Haaland says.

NAHA Archivist Kristina Warner agrees. “If it wasn’t for Lee Rokke’s dedication to cataloging and indexing the collections, we would currently find only a small fraction of the materials researchers ask for. Almost daily, I check the Rokke Index to find more information about a person, place, or event.”

A funeral service was held on February 27 at Christiania Lutheran Church in Lakeville, Minnesota. The Rokke Name Index is available, along with other aids for researchers, at naha.omeka.net.

APPLY FOR FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARD

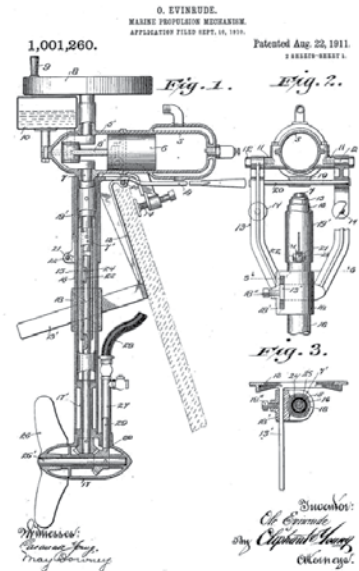
NAHA is pleased to announce the launch of two new fellowships, both to be awarded for the first time in 2024.

Archives Fellowship—Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, NAHA can offer an annual award of up to \$2,000 for a specific research project. This fellowship promotes exploration to achieve new understandings of the Norwegian-American experience. Preference will be given to topics that are outlined in the association’s research prospectus and rely heavily on collections in the NAHA archives. The prospectus and fellowship details are at naha.stolaf.edu.

Publications Fellowship—An annual award of up to \$2,500 is available for research in the field of Norwegian-American studies. While a candidate may propose any topic, priority will go to topics that meet the goals of our research prospectus. Applications also will be evaluated for their potential to produce work publishable by NAHA.

The deadline for both of these new fellowships is October 1, 2023, and awards will be made in early January 2024. NAHA Executive Director Amy Boxrud will answer fellowship questions. Reach her at naha@stolaf.edu.

Odd S. Lovoll Award—NAHA also welcomes applications for its Lovoll Award, which recognizes originality, excellence, and creativity in undergraduate research and writing on any aspect of Norwegian-American studies. The winner’s work will be considered for publication in our academic journal, *Norwegian-American Studies*, and the author will receive a prize of \$500 and a one-year student membership in NAHA. Apply by June 1; the winner is notified by September 1 annually. NAHA Editor Anna Peterson will answer questions about the award. Reach her at naha-editor@stolaf.edu. Additional details about the Odd S. Lovoll Award are also available at naha.stolaf.edu.




THE AGE OF “EVINRUDING”

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL COUPLE WHO MADE THEIR NAME SYNONYMOUS WITH MOTORBOATING

Editor’s Note: We’re revisiting in these pages an article that first appeared in *Norwegian-American Studies* in 1941: “Ole Evinrude and the Outboard Motor,” by Kenneth Bjørk. Some 82 years later—and slightly abridged here—the article still offers an interesting window into the transition that some Norwegian immigrants made from an agrarian rural life to an industrial urban one. While Bjørk titled it as a story about Ole, it’s easy to read—within the lines and not just between them—that this is the story of a couple who worked as a team in business and in life. If they were comfortable as relative equals in their relationship, they must have known that the rest of the world might not be so accepting. Bess acknowledged in a 1928 interview that when representing the company in correspondence, she hid her gender behind the signature “B. Evinrude.” —*Denise Logeland*

(Clockwise from upper left) Ole and Bess Evinrude; a detailed look at the invention that started it all, patent #1,001,260, the Evinrude Marine Propulsion Mechanism; a 1913 ad encouraged readers to think of boating with an Evinrude outboard as an experience so distinctive that it called for its own new verb: “Evinruding.”

Ole Evinrude was several things at once that carry weight with the American public. A self-made inventor, engineer, and businessman, he lived the success story par excellence. Though of humble immigrant origin, he founded in his adopted country, after years of hardship and disappointment, a new and important industry. Big and genial—a veritable mountain of a man—he graciously attributed all success to his frail wife, Bess, who was also his partner in business.

But more important, he won the enduring gratitude of thousands of hunters, fishermen, and vacationers, who were freed by him from the drudgery of rowing a boat. For Evinrude designed and produced the first practical outboard motor. He belongs to the saga of the outdoors, of sports, and of fun, but he also has written his name large in the story of the American economic revolution.

The fact that for a great many people “Evinrude” and “outboard” are synonymous is proof that no detailed description of the outboard is necessary. For those, however, who may never have seen one, it is a two-cycle, internal-combustion engine that burns a mixture of gasoline and oil and is usually attached by clamps to the rear of a rowboat. One starts the outboard by wrapping a knotted cord around a groove in the flywheel and pulling the free end. In the recent motors, one merely pulls at a handle which internally is connected with the flywheel. Once started, the motor’s speed is regulated by a lever. Steering is simple; a tiller arm is easily held in one hand and when moved from side to side, it turns the whole motor.

The noise of the early outboards has been reduced in the new models by placing the exhaust under water, just above the propeller. While some of the larger models will push a boat at the speed of 35 miles an hour, the average small model does well if it attains to a speed of 10 miles.

In price, the outboard is within the reach of the average man. One can buy an Evinrude Mate for \$34.50 and prices go up, not too speedily, from this figure. Attached to an ordinary rowboat, the outboard will do what the average person wants it to do—take one across the lake or up a stream to a favorite fishing spot, or spin one smoothly over the water on a cooling ride. It is light enough to be carried by hand and compact enough to fit into an automobile trunk.

A Quarter a Ride

The inventor of the first practical outboard motor was born April 19, 1877, on a farm about 60 miles north of Oslo, Norway. The father took his family to Wisconsin when, Ole, the oldest son, was five, and the family acquired a homestead at Cambridge, near Lake Ripley. Here Ole worked on his father’s farm during the summer, and in the winter he found employment as a sorter in a nearby tobacco warehouse.



For five years he jumped from job to job, until by experience and study he had become a first-rate machinist AND A SELF-TAUGHT MECHANICAL ENGINEER.

But Ole’s life began at a very early age to center about ships and engines. It is said that during the crossing to America, his mother and grandmother had to rescue him repeatedly from the engine room of the ship on which they were traveling. An uncle, a sailor, taught the boy the different kinds of ships, models of which Ole carefully carved from wood. At 16, the boy made a sailboat in his father’s woodshed. The parts of his first boat found their way into the family stove, but his second attempt was successful, and the boat was launched on Lake Ripley. The curious who crowded about the boat were charged a quarter a ride, with the result that Ole became a capitalist in a small but significant way.

Life on the family farm was no easy one. In all there were 11 hungry boys to feed. It is little wonder that his father frowned on Ole’s somewhat unorthodox ways. What was needed, the father insisted, was heavy farm work in the summer and a steady job for the slack season, not tinkering in the machine shop or woodshed. The launching of the sailboat, however, and its surprising earning power overcame all paternal opposition to a mechanical career.

Ole, as a result, went to Madison in the fall of the same year that he built the sailboat. He obtained a job as apprentice machinist in the farm-machinery shop of Fuller and Johnson and received a salary of 50 cents a day. Quickly mastering his trade, he soon found work in other shops and studied engineering during his spare time.

From Madison he went to Pittsburgh, where he worked in the great steel rolling mills. Next, we find him in Chicago, gaining experience in the machine-tool works. For five years, he jumped from job to job, until by experience and study he had become a first-rate machinist and a self-taught mechanical engineer.

At 23, or in 1900, Ole was back in Wisconsin, where he opened a pattern shop and was at the same time master patternmaker and consulting engineer for the E. P. Allis Company

in Milwaukee. Ole at this time became intensely interested in internal-combustion engines, which were attracting considerable attention at the beginning of the present century. He worked for several of the early motor makers in Milwaukee, and took to designing engines and parts.

Seeking to market his products, he succeeded, after several fruitless efforts, in founding the partnership of Clemick and Evinrude, which was to produce internal-combustion engines to order and to make parts and castings. The venture proved successful, the tiny firm expanding its facilities to half a dozen shops within a few months. Included in its orders was one from the federal government for 50 portable motors.

Ole's "Coffee Grinder"

In the firm of Clemick and Evinrude, the book work was done by Bess Cary, whom Ole had first met when he began to tinker in a rented shed near the Cary home. Bess had watched the big, serious Ole slowly put a horseless carriage together. When he finally found a suitable partner for marketing his engine, the shed remained his headquarters and Bess offered to write letters for the firm. This she did in the evenings, for her days were spent as a student at a local business college.

The story of how Ole turned his thoughts to the outboard motor has been told a good many times, but it will bear another telling. With some friends their own age, Ole and Bess were picnicking near Milwaukee on a Sunday in August 1906. The temperature was well above 90 degrees. The group was on an island about two and a half miles from the shore of an inland lake when, as the story goes, Bess decided that she would like a dish of ice cream. Ole, romantically devoted to his young helper, rowed to shore for the ice cream. Besides severely testing his emotions, this grueling experience gave Ole an idea which he carried to a successful completion three years later. Somewhere along the hot five-mile

BESS'S HEAD FOR BUSINESS

Ole Evinrude was quick to credit his wife, Bess, for his success, as Kenneth Bjørk indicates. He wasn't being merely "gracious," however. Bess was a tenacious and savvy business operator.

While Ole focused solely on designing and building his outboard motors, Bess wrote and placed ads—first in Milwaukee, then nationally—to raise awareness beyond word of mouth. Sales leapt from a few dozen in 1909 to 1,000 in 1910, according to Ralph Lambrecht in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, published by the state's historical society.

In 1911, when the Evinrudes realized they needed something to sustain their company through Midwest winters, Bess explored potential export markets and selling motors to commercial rather than just recreational users. It stabilized the

business and led to strong overseas sales for the lifetime of the company.

She made other key contributions, too, including giving a name to Ole's new motor design (ELTO) and the couple's second company when they launched it in 1920, Lambrecht says.

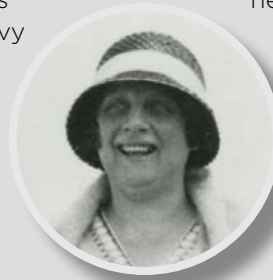
Anyone doubting Bess's importance as a business partner need only listen to Ole himself:

"Alone, I don't believe I'd ever have amounted to much,"

he said when the couple were interviewed in 1928 by *The American Magazine*. "I've no head for business details, can't seem to set my mind to 'em. Give me a pencil and a drawing board, or shut me up with a workbench and tools, and I'm happy, but I can't sell, I can't talk."

"I'm supposed to be a business man, but I'm not," Ole explained. "I'm the kind of man who needs a partner and who found a good one."

—D. L.



stretch he asked himself, "Why not a motor for these boats?" He also recalled the 50 portable motors ordered by the government. Why not a portable motor for rowboats?

It was some time, however, before Evinrude produced his first outboard motor. In the meantime, he parted company with Clemick and entered into a partnership with a retired furniture dealer and his son under the firm name of Motor Car Power Equipment Company. The purpose of the company was to manufacture a standardized motor that could be installed in any carriage. This firm, like the other, was successful until Ole proposed that it market a complete automobile that he had built. His partner was unwilling to spend the amount necessary for advertising; as a result Ole got out of the firm.

Back on Milwaukee's south side, he opened a little shop and returned to the trade of patternmaking. He made engine patterns of all kinds on order from machine shops. With five or six men working under him, he had plenty to occupy his time, and Bess, now Mrs. Evinrude and mother of Ole's child, typed his letters in her kitchen while waiting for dinner to cook.

But Ole had more on his mind than a busy shop, a none-too-strong wife, and a son. He was, in fact, hard at work on his first outboard motor. Working day and night, he came near to ruining his health. He suffered terribly from rheumatism, and finally, unable to stay on his feet, he had to take to bed. But his drawing board was brought to his bed and the work continued. With the return of warm weather, he went back to his shop, where one day, his blue eyes shining, he proudly showed a strange creation to his wife. After first scolding him for spending time on a "coffee grinder" when they desperately needed money, she was quick to see the possibilities in the new motor and virtually assumed all responsibility for the business activities attendant on the invention.

“Don’t Row, Use the Evinrude Detachable”

When Evinrude began to produce his outboard motor in 1909, he was not alone in the field. [As *Fortune* magazine reported in August 1938]:

A “detachable rowboat motor” called the Waterman Porto Motor was on the U.S. market the year of the Evinrude picnic [1906]. The Porto Motor was a dismally inferior product by modern standards, and the most enticing statement the manufacturers could think of to advertise it was “Don’t be afraid of it!”... Evinrude was simply a better engineering job....

With their motor perfected, the Evinrudes began a successful venture in manufacturing. Ole apparently had never planned beyond local orders for motors. At best he would have only a few extra motors on hand. But even before the company began production on a large scale, orders began to pile up. A friend borrowed Ole’s motor for a Sunday outing. Next day, he appeared with 10 orders and cash to pay for them.

Sensing a large potential market for her husband’s motor, Mrs. Evinrude sat down at her kitchen table in 1910 and wrote the company’s first advertisement. “Don’t row,” the advertisement read. “Use the Evinrude detachable rowboat motor.” The response that followed this notice necessitated an office and a suitable plant to meet the flood of orders. Mrs. Evinrude assumed management of the business, and Ole took full charge of the shop.

Capital was needed. A friend, C. J. Meyer, advanced 5,000 dollars and became a partner in the new firm. The following year, 1911, Mrs. Evinrude began a national advertising campaign. Ole was forced to increase his shop to a hundred men. Soon the original 5,000 dollars was gone. Pressed for money, Ole designed his own machinery.

“By turning materials into finished motors,” his wife later explained, “and selling the motors for cash before the bill on the

THE *HUSMANNSGUTT* WHO MADE IT

Numerous accounts of the life and career of Ole Evinrude—aka Ole Andreassen Aaslundeie—have been published in Norwegian media over the decades. Those reports routinely emphasize his early years as a *husmannsgutt*, the son of a cotter, in Norway. It was a humble start, and emphasizing it fashions Ole as an immigrant embodiment of the American Dream.

Another recurring theme of press coverage in Norway is a debate over exactly where in the Toten region Ole came from. A number of settlements near Gjøvik have been argued for, but Hunndalen, which today is part of the city of Gjøvik and sits just west of the city center, is now acknowledged as his birthplace. The *husmannsplass*, the house the family lived in, was still standing in the 1990s and might still be standing today, though it was long ago renovated into someone else’s modern home. —D. L.



materials was due, he made a hundred dollars do the work of a thousand in the ordinary plant. And we worked! There wasn’t a night that we closed our eyes before 12 or one o’clock, and some nights it was two or three.”

Sales in Scandinavia

While its volume of sales increased, the firm nevertheless had problems to overcome. One of its biggest problems was the seasonal nature of the demand for outboards. Seeking a relatively stable market, Mrs. Evinrude contacted export houses through form letters and circulars.

She succeeded in getting one large firm to stock a few motors only because the Danish manager of the Scandinavian department, Oluf Mikkelsen (now Evinrude’s largest distributor), seeing an Evinrude circular in the general manager’s wastebasket, suddenly exclaimed that he could sell such motors to Scandinavian fishermen. Cautiously starting with two motors, this firm increased its orders to many thousands, as Danish and Norwegian fishermen set up a clamor for Evinrude motors. By the end of the third year in business, the Evinrude Company was employing 300 people and had a new factory building.

By the end of the third year, too, Bess Evinrude’s health, never too good, was seriously undermined. It was so bad, in fact, that Ole decided to sell out his share in the Evinrude Company to Meyer and his associates. The understanding when he left the firm was that the Evinrudes were not to re-engage in the outboard business for five years.

While Meyer and his associates substituted a modern flywheel magneto for the old battery ignition and generally stayed ahead of competitors in the outboard motors field, the Evinrudes during the summer months toured the country with a bed in the back seat of their car, and then in the fall set sail on the Mississippi in a cruiser with an engine designed by Ole.

The winter of 1917, which the family spent in New Orleans, saw Ole tinkering around with another motor. “By 1919, the fooling around had resolved itself into a finished model,” *Fortune* reported. The new two-cylinder motor, called the Elto (Evinrude Light Twin Outboard), was the first of its kind, and it marked Evinrude’s second major contribution to the development of the outboard motor. Capable of developing three horsepower as compared to two for the one-cylinder Evinrude, it weighed only 46 pounds, or 27 less than the Evinrude, and substituted aluminum where possible for brass and iron.

Lighter, Faster

Ole's next move was to take his "silvery" Elto to Meyer in Milwaukee and offer it to him for production. Meyer was not interested; the Evinrude was holding its own against competition and he decided not to try the new article.

As a result, Ole started the Elto Outboard Motor Company in Milwaukee and put his motor on the market in 1921. Though he took a financial loss the first year, he later built up a successful business. The Evinrude Motor Company, on the other hand, went downhill in almost inverse ratio to Elto's climb, and Meyer stepped out of the business in 1924.

Ole and Bess were sole partners in the new firm, dependent only on themselves for financial support. Ole designed his own manufacturing equipment, and his wife served as secretary and treasurer of the new firm.

Meyer's departure from the motor scene did not leave the Evinrudes free of competitors. The original Evinrude Company continued under several managements until 1929 and offered very serious competition indeed. In 1926, the Evinrudes put a new Super Elto Twin on the market, confident that this superbly designed motor would steal the outboard market.

They had not counted, however, on a notable trend of the '20s. The Johnson Motor Company of South Bend, Indiana, in 1926 came out with a motor that caused a sensation. The Evinrudes had always stressed lightness of motor, ease of starting, smooth performance, and general dependability. The new Johnson motor weighed almost a hundred pounds, thus defying the trend toward lightness, but it could push a boat along at a speed of 16 miles an hour while other motors could do no more than 10. Besides catching the Evinrudes napping, the new emphasis on speed was in harmony with the mood of the later '20s.

60 Percent of All Motors Sold

After 1930, sales took a big drop, and until 1935, the outboard industry was a sick one. Motors now had to fit a new and shrunken purse. It brought the selling price down from \$115.00, the price of the cheapest motor in 1930, to \$34.50, the price of an Evinrude Mate today.

In 1929, the first of two mergers occurred, when the tottering Evinrude Company was combined with Elto and the Lockwood Motor Company of Jackson, Michigan, to form the Outboard Motors Corporation, with Evinrude as president and largest stockholder and Stephen Briggs as chairman. The new company, though somewhat battered, weathered the Depression.

The Johnson Motor Company, as a result of overexpansion and a reckless advertising campaign, went into receivership in 1932. The reorganized company, after trying a fling at the refrigerator compressor business, was acquired by Ralph Evinrude, Ole's son, and Briggs in 1935. Johnson was formally merged with the Outboard Motors Corporation in 1936, the new firm taking the name Outboard, Marine, and Manufacturing Company. This company, which thus manufactures Evinrude, Elto, and Johnson motors, constitutes the largest factor in the outboard field, accounting for about 60 percent of all motors sold.



THE EVINRUDES HAD ALWAYS STRESSED LIGHTNESS OF MOTOR, ease of starting, smooth performance, and general dependability.

Ole Evinrude died July 12, 1934, a little more than a year after his wife and business partner. His son Ralph is president and a heavy stockholder in the new corporation. About 2,000 men in all are employed by the corporation, whose shares are also listed in the New York Stock Exchange. Mr. Finn T. Irgens, once Ole Evinrude's chief engineer, who was likewise born in Norway, still retains his original position with Evinrude Motors in Milwaukee, and has complete charge of manufacturing.

A GOOD, LONG RUN

The Evinrudes' company flourished—eventually under the name Outboard Marine Corporation—through most of the 1900s. It peaked "in 1988, with 14,000 workers in 28 U.S. and overseas locations," according to reporting by the *Chicago Tribune* in 1995. Coming into a new century, however, the company was struggling and shedding lines of business. It finally declared bankruptcy in 2000. Parts of the company, including Evinrude outboard motors, were purchased by Canada's Bombardier Recreational Products in 2001. In May 2020, Bombardier shocked the boating world by announcing that it was "reorienting" its business and would no longer make outboard motors, thereby ending the story that Ole and Bess Evinrude began 113 years earlier. —D. L.

EXPLORE THE DIGITIZED NORSE-AMERICAN CENTENNIAL COLLECTION

BY KRISTINA WARNER, ARCHIVIST

The Norse-American Centennial was a monumental four-day event at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds, held in June 1925. It marked 100 years of organized migration from Norway to North America, and it provided an opportunity for Norwegian-Americans to both celebrate their heritage and demonstrate their American-ness. Outside of the Twin Cities, celebrations were held in places including Brooklyn, Chicago, Seattle, and more.



We invite you to explore thousands of newly digitized materials from the Norse-American Centennial papers. NAHA was able to carry out this project thanks to the people of Minnesota with grant money from the state's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Here's a short overview of what's been digitized:

→ **Correspondence** of Norwegian-American intellectuals, politicians, music organizations, and others, among them historian Knut Gjerset, Anders Sundheim of Augsburg Publishing House, and U.S. Congressman Harald Knutson. Their letters cover aspects of planning the centennial, including promotion, exhibits, and speakers.

→ **Reports and minutes** that document the inner workings of Norse-American Centennial, Inc., including audits, various committee records, and records of the Women's Auxiliary of the Norse-American Centennial.

→ **Exhibit material, pamphlets, and memorabilia** reflecting on Norwegian identity, literature, arts, crafts, relics, and curios.

→ **Essays** from a competition themed "Why Celebrate the Centennial." View the original

submissions online and find out who won by viewing the "Norse-American Centennial Souvenir" pamphlet. Top placers included Waldemar Ager, Olaf M. Norlie, and Martin Odland.

→ **News clippings** that show, among other things, interest in the centennial event from the Norwegian government, a proposal on the formation of NAHA, and nationwide press comments that offer both praise and criticism of the celebration.

→ **Photographs and film** that show centennial events in Minneapolis–St. Paul and Brooklyn, as well as the *stevne* of *bygdelag* held at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. A 42-minute film by Ray-Bell Films documents the celebration in St. Paul and offers glimpses of Dr. H. G. Stub (president of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America), the centennial athletic meet, the Daughters of Norway drill teams, President Calvin Coolidge, and much more.

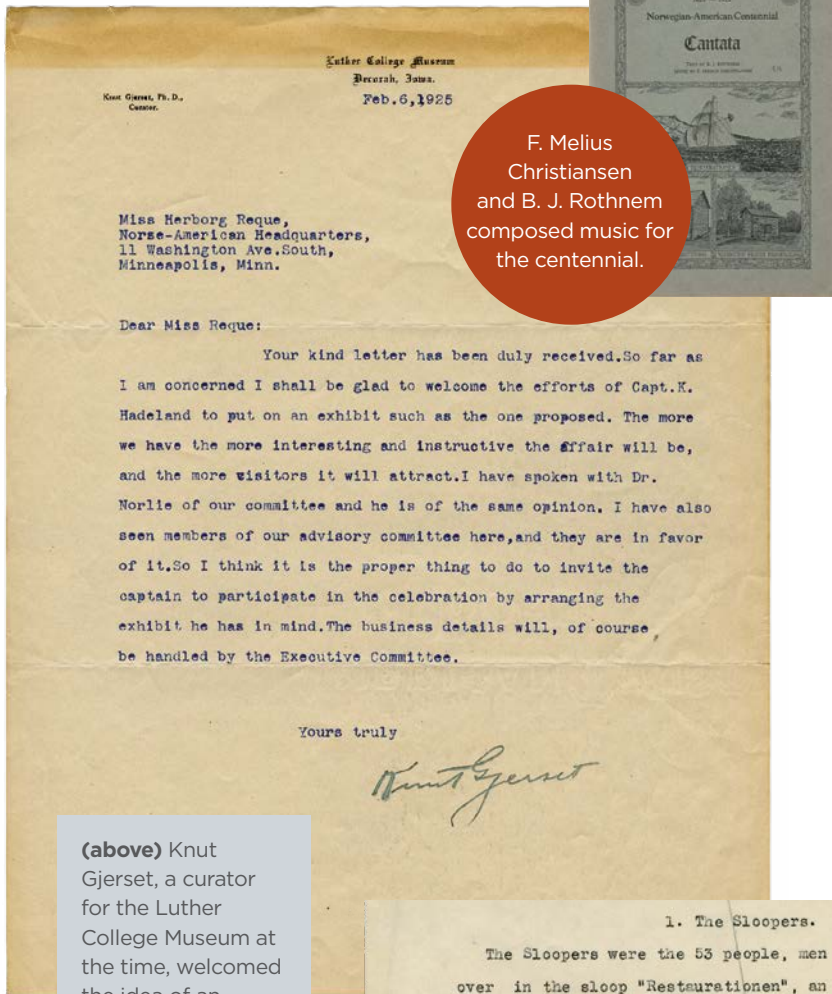
(above) A film crew captured an address to the crowds by President Calvin Coolidge.



NORSE-AMERICAN CENTENNIAL DIGITAL HISTORY PROJECT

Some of the digitized centennial materials have been curated and presented as an online exhibit about the event, the times in which it took place, and its lasting impacts. You'll find it here: <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/norse-american-centennial/index>

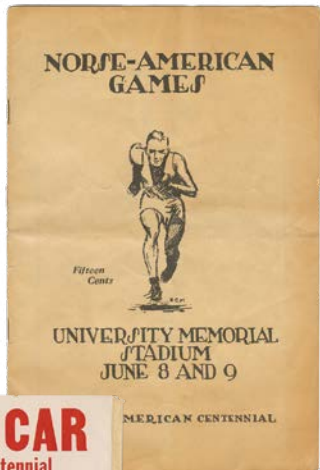
NAHA thanks Erik Moe, '23, and Ryan Kiser, '25, both Norwegian majors at St. Olaf College, for their work as creators of this digital exhibit.



(above) Knut Gjerset, a curator for the Luther College Museum at the time, welcomed the idea of an exhibit by Captain Knute Hadeland at the centennial, and coordinated it with Herborg Reque at centennial headquarters on Washington Avenue in downtown Minneapolis.



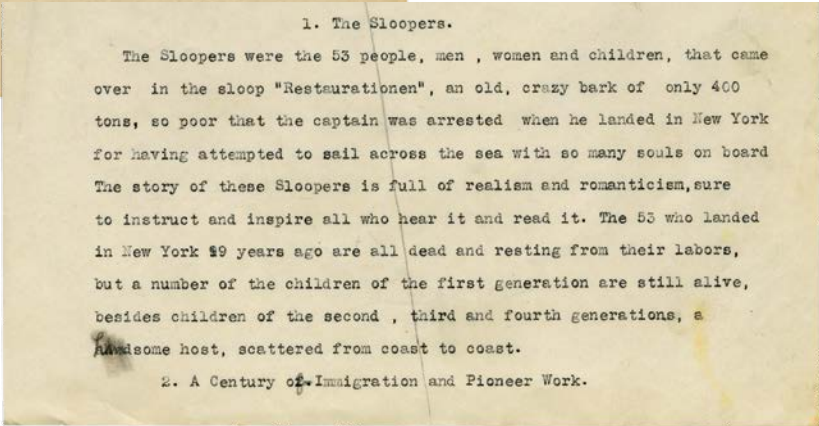
F. Melius Christiansen and B. J. Rothnem composed music for the centennial.



(right, below) The Norse-American Games featured baseball, soccer, bicycling, and track events. Ephemera in the collection also include an "Official Car" sign for vehicles used in the celebration.



(below) Olaf Norlie, known for his compilations of facts and figures describing the Norwegian diaspora in America, especially the Norwegian Lutheran Church, was a strong contender in the centennial essay contest, bringing to bear his skills as a pastor and a professor at both Luther and St. Olaf Colleges.



(below) The "society" described in this newspaper clipping is NAHA, which was just beginning its work in the year of the centennial, 1925.



(left) The centennial in St. Paul brought together thousands of Norwegian Americans, both as organizers of the event and participants. Photographed here are board members of Norse-American Centennial, Inc., the organizing corporation.





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