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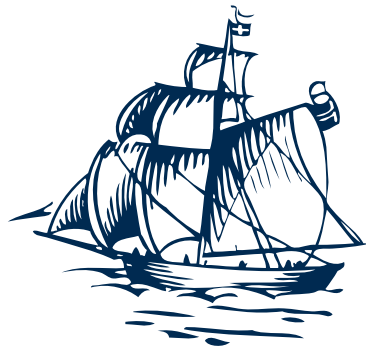
Currents

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION | SUMMER 2023 VOLUME 188

A large, sepia-toned portrait of Hans Heg, a man with a full, dark beard and mustache, looking slightly to the right. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt and a dark tie. The portrait occupies the right two-thirds of the lower half of the cover.

Family, Community, and Humanity in the Story of Hans Heg

A new biography
digs deeper than
the hero's legend.



NEW ARCHIVES READING ROOM

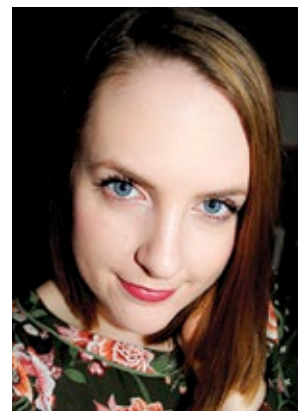
You've probably heard the news by now that NAHA is moving its collections into a new archives vault. We are thrilled that we can continue and improve on our work to preserve these documents for future generations. In conjunction with moving the archival collections, the NAHA offices will be moving, too, but not far. Our new work space is just a few steps down the hallway from our current location.

The new offices will be the home of both the NAHA archives and the St. Olaf College archives and special collections. A benefit of this new space is that it includes a dedicated reading room for archival researchers and non-circulating materials. One example of what this means for researchers is that the genealogy materials currently housed in the Rølvaag Library reference room will move downstairs into our space. Having all of the collections located in the same area will make it much easier to do research in our collections.

The genealogy collection consists of more than 950 volumes of *bygdebøker* and genealogical resources—not a small collection by any means. A *bygdebok* (the singular form of the word) is one of the best sources of Norwegian genealogical information. It provides a history of a specific community and the farms there, recording who lived at each place and when. Some volumes include birth, marriage, and death dates; landholdings and chattels; physical descriptions of the farms and their buildings; details about residents and their possessions; as well as accounts of historical events.

If you are curious about which *bygdebøker* the college library owns, check out the Hovland Bygdebok Index at naha.omeka.net/bygdeboker. Created by volunteer Dale Hovland, this guide is essential to understanding the collection, as we do not have a staff member dedicated to genealogical research. The new reading room also will house the Rowberg newspaper clippings, which include obituaries and other biographical data.

Keep an eye on our website as we share more information about the move and our new reading room. If you plan to visit the archives for research, please make an appointment in advance. As we move the collections, there might be days when the materials are inaccessible. We want to ensure that we can support you in your research when you're here.



Sincerely,
Kristina Warner, Archivist

on the cover

Hans Heg is best known as a hero of the U.S. Civil War, but his life had many facets, including his deep connection to family. Portraits here are from the 1860s and show Heg, his wife, Gunild, and their two older children, Edmund and Hilda.

in brief

FAMILY HISTORY WRITING EVENT AVAILABLE ONLINE

On May 6, more than 120 members and friends of NAHA attended "Putting the 'Story' in Family History," our virtual spring event. The featured speaker was author, historian, and writing instructor Dr. Rachel Hanel, who is an associate professor at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

During the hour-long event, Hanel highlighted different approaches to creative nonfiction. She encouraged family history writers to include their own ponderings and insights in their work. She also shared ideas for making a personal or family story more universal, such as drawing upon themes that other readers can relate to. The presentation ended with a discussion of options for publishing family stories.



Read about Rachel Hanel, historian, author, and guest speaker, at rachelhanel.com.

IF YOU MISSED THE EVENT, YOU CAN WATCH IT, along with many of our past presentations, on our website: naha.stolaf.edu/events/.

Apply for Two New Research Fellowships for 2024



ARCHIVES FELLOWSHIP

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, NAHA will 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 (available on our website) and that rely heavily on collections in the NAHA archives.



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.

APPLICATIONS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS ARE DUE BY OCTOBER 1 this year for awards given the following year. Funding should be used within two years. More details are available at naha.stolaf.edu. Send email to naha@stolaf.edu with questions.

COVER IMAGES: (HANS HEG AND GUNILD HEG) NAHA; (CHILDREN EDMUND AND HILDA HEG) LORI COFFEY

ORAL INTERVIEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES INFORM RAND SCHOLAR'S RESEARCH

St. Olaf College student Helen White ('23) was curious about the Norwegian dialects spoken by immigrants in America. She found much of the research material she needed in the NAHA archives.

White, a Norwegian major, is also pursuing an independent linguistics degree. She applied for and received the college's Rand Scholar Award, and it provided her the opportunity to explore her language questions. She recently shared her findings with the St. Olaf campus community in a presentation called "Dialectal Development and Comparison: Norwegian in the U.S. and Norway."

The Rand Scholar Award is named in honor of Sidney Rand,

sixth president of St. Olaf College and U.S. Ambassador to Norway. It is designed to foster and support undergraduate research in the life and culture of Norway. The \$5,000 award has been offered each year since 2007 to the St. Olaf student who presents the best proposal for an independent research course focusing on some aspect of Norwegian life.

Some of the questions that drove White's research were: How does modern Norwegian in Norway



Helen White wondered if exposure to other dialects influenced immigrants' speech.

compare to the Norwegian spoken by Americans? How well was the Norwegian language preserved in America after immigration? And, how did Norwegian dialects affect one another in a new North American context?

Having worked at NAHA as a student employee and summer intern, White was already aware of a collection of recently digitized oral interviews that had been conducted by Odd Lovoll and Terje Joranger in the 1990s and 2000s. She was especially interested in a subset of the content—a set of dialect samples—and she set to work transcribing and translating them.

"The oral interviews were the starting point and backbone of

my project. I could not have done this project without them, since they composed half of my data set," says White.

As she analyzed the samples, she looked for ways in which individuals' dialects (known as "heritage" dialects) differed from the dominant dialect of the region. She broke the samples into four groups, with immigrants originating from the regions of Østlandet, Vestlandet, Sørlandet, and Trøndelag. She analyzed the dialect of each speaker by noting how they pronounced three kinds of "indicator" words: the adverb "not"; interrogatives, or question words, such as who, what,

I was surprised to learn just how much the speakers of American Norwegian varied their language use and borrowed between dialects.

— HELEN WHITE

and when; and pronouns.

White's main finding was a prevalence of variation within individuals' use of language. "I was surprised to learn just how much the speakers of American Norwegian varied their language use and borrowed between dialects. I didn't know that so many speakers of Norwegian changed their language use based on the dialects they were exposed to," White says.

Her findings showed that the majority dialect spoken in a region often influenced speech, although the speaker's heritage dialect was still important. White's conclusion: "It seems that dialects are quite flexible."

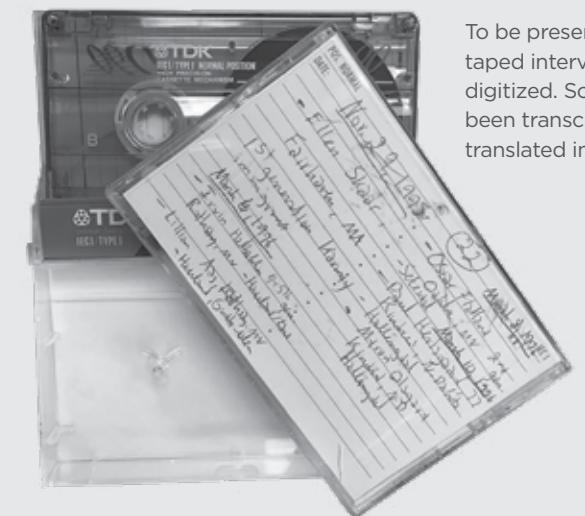
From Analog Cassettes to Research-Ready Interviews

In 2019, historian, author, and former NAHA editor Odd Lovoll donated 44 cassette tapes to the NAHA archives. The recordings were of interviews conducted in the 1990s and early 2000s by Lovoll and his then research associate, Terje Joranger, for Lovoll's book projects. (Today, Joranger serves as director of the Norwegian Emigrant Museum near Hamar.)

NAHA Archivist Kristina Warner knew these tapes would be an exciting addition to the collection. She also saw it as a challenge to preserve the interviews and provide access to them, since cassette tapes have a short lifespan. Soon after the donation was received, our Adopt-a-Cassette campaign was launched, and NAHA members answered the call by donating funds earmarked for digitizing these tapes.

There was more to do to make the material accessible. The next steps were to transcribe and then translate the interviews into English, so they could be more easily discoverable and used by researchers in the future. As a NAHA student employee, Helen White spent hours listening to and transcribing the interviews. Since she has advanced Norwegian language skills, she also was able to translate even the challenging dialectal samples that were created as part of the interviews.

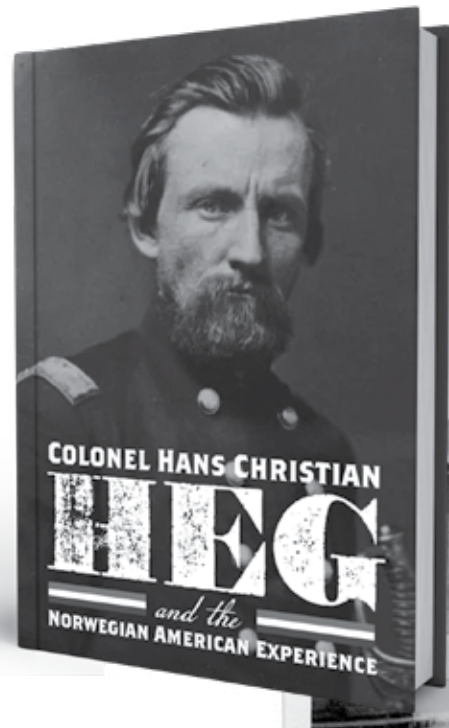
"This project says so much about the work of our association. It's NAHA in a nutshell," says Executive Director Amy Boxrud. "One generation of researchers shares their work with the next generation. Our archivist makes that connection happen, by overseeing the preservation, digitization, transcribing, translation, and cataloging efforts of our archives staff, volunteers, and vendors. And the support of our members is what makes it all possible."



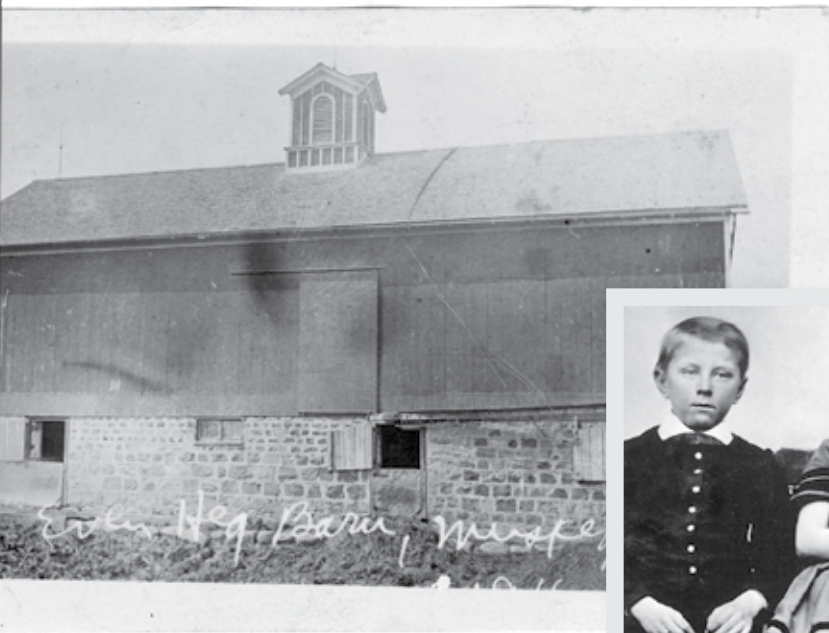
To be preserved, the taped interviews were digitized. Some have been transcribed and translated into English.

	ENGLISH	BOKMÅL	NYNORSK	OTHER DIALECTAL FORMS
White listened for these words to hear if immigrant speakers were still using their heritage dialect or had shifted toward the dialect prevalent in their new community.	not	ikke	ikkje	ittj, itte, inte
	what	hva	kva	ka/kå, hå
	who	hvem	kven	kem, håkken
	where	hvor	kvar	kor, kvor, hår
	why	hvorfor	kvifor	koffør, kvorfor, håfør
	how	hvordan	korleis	kordan, håssen/åssen
	I	jeg	eg	æ, i, e
	He, she	han, hun	han, ho	'n
	we	vi	vi	me
	they	de	dei	dem, døm

IMAGE: NAHA



In Lovoll's book, Heg the military officer is inseparable from Heg the immigrant—whose father Even Heg's barn (below) was a community gathering place in the Muskego, Wisconsin, settlement—and equally bound to Heg, the loving father of Edmund and Hilda (shown) and Elmer.



HANS HEG, RECONSIDERED

IN HIS NEW BIOGRAPHY, HISTORIAN ODD LOVOLL LOOKS BEHIND THE IMAGE OF THE CIVIL WAR HERO FOR THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

BY DENISE LOGELAND

Odd Lovoll's 10th book, *Colonel Hans Christian Heg and the Norwegian American Experience*, is newly published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press and newly mailed to NAHA members to enjoy. Heg's story might be familiar to many, at least in part. The immigrant from Lier, Norway, famously led the Norwegian-American 15th Wisconsin Regiment through Civil War campaigns, until, in 1863 at the Battle of Chickamauga in Georgia, he died.

But Heg's life was more than his military service, as Lovoll discusses. Moreover, the influences that led to Heg's service and shaped Heg's views likewise influenced and shaped life in Norwegian-American communities.

In a conversation with NAHA *Currents*, edited here for length and clarity, Lovoll talks about his task as a social historian, intent on seeing Heg in the context of his family and community, and in turn, seeing the community through Heg's experience.

Q What moved you to write this book?
Well, I have been interested in Heg and the American Civil War for many years. For my PhD, I had the 19th century as my area of expertise, and within the 19th century, the Civil War. My interest goes way back.

Then I also have to say that in 2009, Heg's great-great-grandson, James T. Heg, who was then deputy chief of mission at the American embassy in Oslo, came all the

way to Northfield to try to convince me to write the biography. But then I was working on something else.

But I was drawn to this topic again in 2020, when the statue of Heg was toppled [by protesters] in Madison, Wisconsin. And I thought maybe now is the time. I realized no biography of Heg was ever done that justifies being called a 'biography.' They concentrate on him only as the leader of this regiment—except for the Theodore Blegen book, which has all the Heg letters. Those were wonderful and I used those a lot in my book.

My interest was to see Heg as a fellow human being, not this hero who everyone celebrated, but to try to understand him as a young man. And so that is how I began. I paint a picture of him as the human being that he is. And then, as a part of that, examine his role in the Civil War.

Q What did earlier works tell us about Hans Heg?

Two works were published in the last century on Colonel Heg, though they focused only on certain aspects of his life. Waldemar Ager's *Oberst Heg og hans gutter* (1916) was published in translation by NAHA in 2000 as *Colonel Heg and His Boys: A Norwegian Regiment in the American Civil War*, with an introduction by Harry Clevon.

Theodore C. Blegen's book, *The Civil War Letters of Colonel Hans Christian Heg*, was published by NAHA in 1936. It is a compilation of the letters with commentary.

What is so amazing about Colonel Heg is that in the war—and he was right in it—he had time to write to his wife, Gunild, and he took time to write to his son and his daughter. He was obviously a family person.

Q It's been many years since those books were written. Did you find information that they didn't include?

Yes, and here I have to thank the Wisconsin Historical Society. It is rare to find people as helpful as the people in the archives were.

In these books that are called the *Wisconsin Blue Books*—which Blegen does not use and Ager does not use—they had information, for instance, about Heg as Wisconsin prison commissioner, and also information about the abolitionist Sherman Miller Booth. Wisconsin was the state that more than any other state broke the fugitive slave laws to help the slaves escape to Canada. And Booth was the main person. He was in prison many, many times. [Heg, as prison commissioner, gave him a hospitable stay and the freedom to come and go.]

I found it so interesting, the *Blue Books* had an article on the founding of the Republican Party in Ripon, Wisconsin, in 1854. We should keep in mind that Wisconsin was the center of the Republican Party, though the party then was not quite the way it is now. [Republicans were the party of Abraham Lincoln and the abolition of slavery.]

Q What was your work process like? Once you decided to take on this subject, how did you go about it?

Well, I had some sources from before. And then I began planning, and something that Daron Olson [of Indiana University East] has criticized [in works about Norwegian Americans] is that writers forget about the homeland. I agree with that, and I have a whole chapter about the Norwegian homeland, simply because there was a transfer of that to the 'empty'—though there were Native Americans—Midwest.

And then I cover life on the American frontier, and these people coming from Norway, why they left, and did they ever regret coming to Wisconsin? I'm sure many, many of them did, because they hoped for a new life. They were able to

accomplish that little by little.

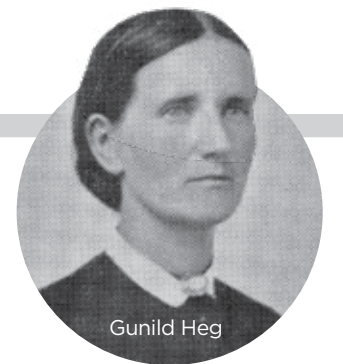
Of course, Heg is in all of this. And then in the three last chapters, I focus more on what he did and his challenges and the broader historical picture in which he functioned. But it's not just about him, it's him in a historical, social context. One manuscript reviewer wanted me to do more about the Civil War. I said, 'I'm not writing a history of the Civil War, I'm writing about Heg's service in the Civil War.' That's the difference.

One thing I want to stress is that this is not a book where I simply want to glorify the Norwegians. It is true that the 15th Wisconsin was the only Scandinavian regiment in the Civil War. But there were also German, Irish, and French units. That there was an ethnic regiment in the Civil War was not unique.

I am also not writing to glorify Heg. I'm placing him in a broad historical context. But what he did, you cannot help admiring him as a human being, as a father, and as a husband. And, you know, he reformed the prison system in Wisconsin in his 20s. Can you imagine?

Q You've talked about planning the structure and content of the book. What was the research itself like?

Research, that's something I've been doing since I became a historian. It's always a big challenge, and sometimes you find things by accident.



“What is so amazing about Colonel Heg is that in the war...he had time to write to his wife, Gunild, and he took time to write to his son and his daughter. He was obviously a family person.”

— ODD LOVOLL

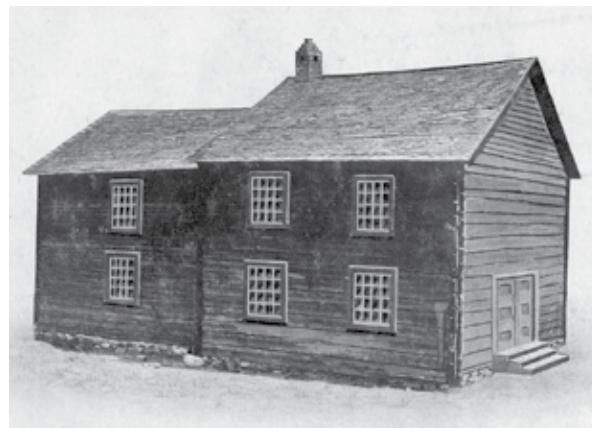
IMAGES: (BOOK) MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESS; (EVEN HEG BARN) NAHA; (HEG CHILDREN) LORI COFFEY

IMAGE NAHA

One thing that I discovered—I happened to be driving past this place in Wisconsin with my son—was the Milton House. That’s in central Wisconsin. I knew that there were very many Underground Railroad stations in southern Wisconsin, where they helped escaped slaves. And Milton House was one of these stations. It was a central place for stagecoaches, and then eventually

they had a railroad coming through, and then there was the river and lake [as escape routes], so they could help a lot.

The thing about research, you don’t ever give up, you go everywhere, anyplace that you think you can find something. I talked to all of the Civil War experts that I could find, and they all had information—for instance, about a young boy that the Heg family adopted because his parents died. And that I didn’t know before I talked with this woman who had the story about it, and so I put that in a footnote. These things are what I found fascinating in doing research.



Odd Lovoll found himself relating to Hans Heg as a man who cherished family. (Top) Lovoll celebrated his book with son Ronald, daughter-in-law Margit, and grandsons Peter Magnar and Jon Elias. (Center) Heg descendants came to the rededication of his statue in Madison in May 2022. (Bottom) Land owned by Heg’s father, Even, was used to build the Old Muskego Church.

Q You’ve touched on the importance of family to Heg, and you wanted to show him as a human being and a family person. I think I hear that you had a feeling of connection to Heg.

Yes, very much so, because in my life, after finding the love of my life, the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me was to become a father, and to be a father. Nothing more important has happened to me. And he seemed to be like that, too. He even joked to his wife [during the war], ‘Why don’t you come and visit me, but why don’t we wait until I become a general.’

Q Was he saying basically, ‘I’ll have a better tent’?

Exactly! That was it! And when he was promoted, he wrote jokingly, ‘Now I can decorate my tent.’ So he had a sense of humor about who he was, too.

I try to understand him. One thing I haven’t mentioned that surprised me: Even though he was a Haugean [adhering to the teachings of pietistic lay preacher Hans Nilsen Hauge], he also joined the Freemasons. When Heg was killed, it was the Masonic Lodge that arranged for his funeral. That’s very interesting, actually. Later, his body was moved to the [Muskego] church that his father built.

He had great respect for human beings. He ran a little grocery store together with Native Americans. He got very close to Native Americans in Wisconsin. I describe also how he acted as a military leader, and that he was greatly admired by the people below him.

I am, I think, an objective historian, but I do get moved, and especially when I explore the slavery issue, which I write quite a bit about. It is very difficult not to be moved when you see how families were separated and children were sold. And the very idea that you have a human being

standing on a stage and you can go up and check his muscles and his teeth, and then bid and this person becomes somebody’s property, like a horse or a cow. It’s so abhorrent, and I can understand that Heg was shocked by that coming to America.

Q You’ve illuminated what it means to be a social historian by explaining your approach to this book. But how would you describe what social history is?

Well, social history replaced what had been done before in U.S. history, in the 1960s. Up to that time, we had Thomas Carlyle. He was a Scotch historian in the 1800s, and he is sort of the father of this idea that history is the history of great men—not even great women, just great men. And, of course, social history simply abandoned that totally: History is the history of all of us.

Social history is the history of the society and the people who live in that society. It does not neglect people who are leaders in that society, but it tells how they were leaders of a society with other people.

Q Societies change, and the social context for telling Heg’s story has changed from what it was when Ager and Blegen wrote a century ago. How do you think the context for telling and hearing Heg’s story is different now?

Heg then was celebrated as the big, big hero, and back in 1925, which I write a lot about, a thousand people participated in a play to honor him. By contrast, the people who tore down his statue [in Madison in 2020] claimed they didn’t know who this was. For them it was just a white man. But I think that the vandalism of his statue brought his name back into the public.

THE WIDE AWAKES

When Hans Christian Heg, as reported in the *Waupun Times* on August 5, 1860, spoke of his “force,” he was not simply speaking of those under his command as prison commissioner. Heg also had a second command as first captain of the Waupun company of the “Wide Awakes,” a recently formed abolitionist club organized in every state of the North to defend against trespass by Southern slave hunters. The Wide Awakes were a youth organization and later a paramilitary organization cultivated by the Republican Party during the 1860 presidential election. During the four-way race for president, the six-year-old Republican Party found support from a new generation of voters who helped push Abraham Lincoln to victory.

They were known as the Wide Awakes because of their youth, enthusiasm, and torchlit nighttime marches. While campaigning for Lincoln, William H. Seward, soon to become secretary of state, claimed, “Now the old men are folding their arms and going to sleep and the young men are wide awake.” The historical record shows that the Wide Awakes began to assemble in Hartford, Connecticut, on the night of February 25, 1860.... During the following weeks, the Lincoln campaign made plans to develop Wide Awakes throughout the country to spearhead voter registration.

The movement grew quickly in the spring and summer, with clubs forming across the North and Midwest. Chicago had 48 clubs alone.... On the day of Lincoln’s election as president, the Wide Awakes had grown to 500,000 members.

From *Colonel Hans Christian Heg and the Norwegian American Experience*, by Odd S. Lovoll



Norwegians in the Confederacy

An upcoming book by Gunnar Nerheim, a NAHA member and professor emeritus of modern history at the University of Stavanger, examines the Norwegian immigrant communities of Texas in the 19th century, including their actions during the Civil War and the lead-up to war.

While it’s long been understood that most Norwegian immigrants in the U.S. were opposed to slavery, Nerheim found that it wasn’t universally true. Especially in the cotton-growing regions of east Texas, some Norwegian settlers assimilated to the slave-based agricultural economy and accepted it, even buying slaves, according to Nerheim.

“There were differences,” Nerheim said in an interview with the University of Stavanger. “The sources show that there were also some Norwegians who freely volunteered with the Confederate side in the Civil War, relatively early on in the war, and through this, fought to maintain slavery,” while others were “enlisted due to the social pressure to show patriotism” toward the southern cause.

Nerheim’s book, *Norsemen Deep in the Heart of Texas: Norwegian Immigrants 1845–1900*, will be published by Texas A&M University Press and is expected in early 2024. —Denise Logeland



Gunnar Nerheim

THE WORLD WAR II FILMS AND PHOTOS OF CONRAD CAMPBELL NORSGAARD

BY KRISTINA WARNER, ARCHIVIST

NAHA has a unique collection of materials related to Norway and the United States during World War II. This includes records of organizations like American Relief for Norway, and the Camp Little Norway Association. CLNA was established in 1941 after a group of American citizens of Norwegian descent from Minneapolis visited Camp Little Norway in Ontario, Canada, the home during the war of the Royal Norwegian Air Force.

Beyond organizational records, the archives document personal experiences during the war. One collection in particular, the Conrad Campbell Norsgaard collection, documents his life and work as a professional photographer and cinematographer who was the official photographer for the Royal Norwegian Air Force. Norsgaard was at the RNAF's training facilities in Canada from nearly the beginning of World War II until its end. During this period, he photographed servicemen and their airplanes, the Norwegian royal family, various training sites, and many official and unofficial activities.

The 1,500-plus photographs and negatives in the Norsgaard collection document various aspects of the war effort. Some of the transparencies include aerial views of another camp, Vesle Skaugum; portraits of Ole Reistad, commander of Camp Little

Norway; and pilots with their planes. The black and white negatives cover geographic locations including Canada, India, Norway, and England. Images from Sigrid Undset's trip across the Soviet Union to Japan and the United States during the war are included. There are also some negatives of the armistice in Norway.

Film reels are part of the collection. There are 19 reels of 16mm film capturing air force activities and Norwegian royals. They document Crown Prince Olav, Crown Princess Märtha, and their children christening planes from the Wings for Norway program, as well as picnicking and riding bicycles, and playing with the Camp Little Norway mascot, a brown bear. Other films show ski and aerial training, day-to-day life for air force members, a flight from Montreal to India to deliver a Liberator bomber and Norwegian crew, and the return to Norway after its liberation.

SONS OF NORWAY GRANT WILL PRESERVE CAMPBELL NORSGAARD'S WORK

Thanks to a recent grant from the Sons of Norway Foundation, NAHA is able to digitize the Campbell Norsgaard films before they are lost to deterioration. Audiovisual materials with an acetate base, like these films, are at risk as the acetate is transformed into acetic acid over time. Acetate deterioration is otherwise known as "vinegar syndrome," and it's fairly easy to detect by smell alone. Some of the Campbell Norsgaard films are already exhibiting signs of vinegar syndrome, and it's important to digitize these priceless primary sources quickly. NAHA is grateful for the support of the Sons of Norway Foundation.



Pilot sitting in the rafters at "Lille Norge"



Campbell Norsgaard



Pilots of the Royal Norwegian Air Force (RNAF) enjoying down time



(above) Campbell Norsgaard, pictured with the camera, standing in front of a plane with pilots of the RNAF

(right) Reviewing a pilot training schedule for the RNAF



More to Explore in the Archives

Lise Aubert Lindbaek papers, 1944-1945

Notes and other materials of a Norwegian war correspondent who lectured in the United States, 1943-45. Beginning in 1925, she covered news from Italy, Germany, France, Spain, and North Africa. For a time, she was a correspondent for *Nordisk Tidende* in Brooklyn.

Hermana Rye Haugan papers, 1893-1972

Papers of a Chicago woman, widow of the journalist and editor Reidar Rye Haugan. Hermana Rye Haugan was active in Norwegian organizations in Chicago and was a leader in relief work for Norway during and after World War II. She was secretary of the Chicago Working Center for Norway, a sewing and knitting group, 1944-45.

Arne M. Bjørndal journal, 1940

The journal of Arne Bjørndal, who was involved in resistance activities following the German invasion of Norway on April 9, 1940. The journal documents his experiences April 9-20, as well as earlier life experiences. In "My Early Years: From School Days to War Time," Bjørndal reflects on his childhood, the invasion of Norway, becoming a "citizen arrestee," and being sent to Ebreichsdorf sanatorium on the Austria-Hungary border.



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