Currents

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION | FALL 2023 VOLUME 189

Bethany Indian Mission

An encounter between American-Indian and Norwegian-American Cultures

OUR VISION, OUR WORK

on the cover

In this April 1930 photo, Indian children at the Bethany Mission near Wittenberg, Wisconsin, are dressed for baptism.

As I look at this issue of *Currents*, I'm reminded of the vision statement that our board crafted during our recent strategic planning process. We aim "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." The pages of this newsletter illustrate some of the ways our vision plays out in our work.

Stewardship has been the work of NAHA from the start. Our founders began collecting letters, journals, photographs, and other materials to preserve the history of the Norwegian-American people. We continue to gather and care for diverse materials. See page 3 to learn how a recent summer internship has focused on caring for the papers of the Bygdelag—organizations based on common ties to a specific home district in Norway. Pages 10 and 11 highlight other archival collections that contain the work of creative writers. Their poems and stories were donated to NAHA for safekeeping and to make them accessible to later generations. On page 5, Dale Hovland tells about the experiences of the *husmenn*, or cotters, in Norway, laborers who had no land or only small holdings on larger farms. Many were among the emigrants who left Norway with a dream of owning land in America.

Their settlement on lands in the United States and Canada links the story of Norwegian Americans to the story of American Indians, who were inhabitants of these places. Encounters between the two groups were varied, but NAHA Editor Anna Peterson shows us one example in her article on page 6, about the Bethany Indian Mission. This boarding school near Wittenberg, Wisconsin, was a place where Norwegian Lutherans—relative newcomers to the United States—sought to Christianize and Americanize Indigenous people. Peterson unpacks some of the school's history and its ties to Luther College in Iowa.

Thank you for being a *Currents* reader and for your support of NAHA and its mission of stewardship of Norwegian-American experiences. After you have finished reading, consider passing this issue on to a history-loving friend, along with an invitation to become a member.

In appreciation,

Amy Boxrud

Amy Boxrud, Executive Director

COVER IMAGE: NAHA

in brief

BYGDELAG COLLECTION IS FOCUS OF SUMMER INTERNSHIP

Katie Bergquist (left, with Archivist Kristina Warner) took a deep dive into the Bygdelag collection to better catalog the materials. See the new finding aid at *naha.omeka.net/files/show/896*.

Katie Bergquist has worked this summer as a NAHA intern, helping to process, catalog, and create promotional materials for the Bygdelag papers housed in our archives. A St. Olaf College student ('25) majoring in history and English, Bergquist also has taken several semesters of Norwegian—a helpful skill to have for working with this collection.

The *bygdelag* are clubs (*lag*) whose members come from or descend from a particular region in Norway. (The other part of the name comes from the word for a rural settlement, or *bygd*.) Immigrants to the United States from Norway organized the bydelag beginning around the turn of the 20th century, so some of the lag are now well over a century old. The first one, the Valdres lag, formed in 1899. That lag and others still exist. The bygdelag papers at NAHA also include materials from the groups' common council, or *fellesraad*.

The bygdelag collection is one of the largest single collections at NAHA. It fills nearly 90 archive boxes, plus another dozen boxes of unprocessed material.

"Since the collection is so large and has grown so much through the years, reprocessing it now allows us to better describe its contents," says NAHA Archivist Kristina Warner. Among the materials in the collection are clippings, constitutions, correspondence, meeting minutes, financial records, pamphlets, pictures, programs, and reports that deal with the organizations' leadership, special projects, and the Norse-American Centennial of 1925.

Thanks to Bergquist, it will all be easier to navigate, Warner says: "Researchers will now have a better understanding of what is included in the collection."

"This internship fit perfectly with my interests," Bergquist says. After her time at St. Olaf, she plans to pursue a master's degree in library sciences or museum studies. Through her work at NAHA, Bergquist learned best practices for records management, archival processing, and public history, as well as skills in communications and digital media that are highly transferrable to other fields.

Fellowships Reminder The deadline for two new NAHA fellowships is right around the corner. Applications and all supporting documents must be received by October 1 for funds that will be awarded in January, 2024. Funds should be used within two years. Find our research prospectus and fellowship details at *naha.stolaf.edu*, and send your questions to *naha@stolaf.edu*.

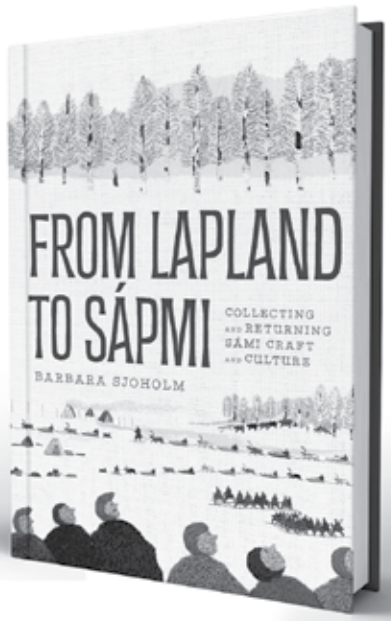
Archives Fellowship—Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, NAHA will offer an annual award of up to $2,000 for a specific research project. This fellowship promotes exploration to achieve new understandings of the Norwegian-American experience. Preference will be given to topics that are outlined in the association's research prospectus and and projects 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.

IMAGES: NAHA

in brief

UPCOMING EVENTS



Sámi Collections and Sámi Museums in the Nordic Countries

October 4, 2023, 4 pm
Tomson Hall, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota

Author Barbara Sjoholm will discuss national museums in the Nordic countries with significant collections of Sámi material culture. The artifacts include sacred drums and altars taken by missionaries in the 17th century, along with sleds, furs, clothing, knives, and baskets procured by amateur collectors, ethnographers, and curators through the mid-20th century. Sjoholm will also discuss the establishment of Sámi museums in Norway, Sweden, and Finland in the past 50 years and their role in the renaissance of Indigenous Sámi music, *duodji* (handicraft), and language restoration. Nordic museums are currently repatriating thousands of objects acquired in the past from the Sámi homelands to these Sámi museums.

Barbara Sjoholm

Sjoholm is the author of *From Lapland to Sápmi: Collecting and Returning Sámi Craft and Culture* (University of Minnesota Press, 2023) and of the recently reissued *The Palace of the Snow Queen: Winter Travels in Lapland and Sápmi.* A translator of Norwegian and Danish, she is the recipient of fellowships and awards from the National Endowment of the Arts and the American-Scandinavian Foundation. She lives in Port Townsend, Washington.

This event is co-hosted by the St. Olaf College Norwegian Department and NAHA, and is free and open to the public. Visit the NAHA website (*naha.stolaf.edu*) for information on virtual access to the presentation.

NAHA Teams Up with St. Olaf Alumni and Family Travel

"Norway: A Thousand Years of Migration" will traverse Norway from Stavanger to Snåsa. Participants on this 10-day tour will explore the ways people have been on the move to, from, and within Norway over the past millennium, changing the course of transatlantic history. Topics will include migration within Norway, emigration to North America in the 19th and 20th centuries, and the return migration that followed, as well as the ways Norwegians have influenced the migration of other ethnic groups. We'll investigate the voluntary and involuntary movements of the Sámi, Norway's Indigenous people, and look at the role that Norwegians played in forced migration during the transatlantic slave trade while under Danish rule. Along the way, we'll discuss two migration-themed novels, giving travelers the chance to learn more about modern migration to Norway and the shared experiences of immigrants.

August 4–13, 2024 Led by NAHA board member Kari Lie Dorer, King Olav V chair in Scandinavian-American studies at St. Olaf College, and Amy Boxrud, executive director of NAHA. This tour has filled, but a second tour with the same itinerary is offered a few days later.

August 7–16, 2024 At presstime, space remains on this second tour, which will be hosted by Tanya Thresher, visiting associate professor of Norwegian. Learn more at *wp.stolaf.edu/travel/2024-norway/*. Mention your NAHA membership to receive a discount.

IMAGES: (BOTTOM) NAHA

Jacob Fjelde Art Tour Minneapolis

October 28, 2023

Whether you are an arts lover or a history enthusiast, you'll want to be on our guided bus tour of Minneapolis, featuring the art of sculptor Jacob Fjelde. NAHA board member Kristin Anderson, professor of art at Augsburg University, will guide us as we explore the life and work of Fjelde, who emigrated from Ålesund, Norway, in 1887 and lived in Minneapolis until his death in 1896. Stops will include Augsburg University, Loring Park, the Minneapolis Central Library, Lakewood Cemetery, and Minnehaha Park.

Anderson teaches art history and architectural history, including courses focused on American art, Scandinavian art, and women and art. Her popular course on "The Designed Environment" delves into the architectural and urban history of the Twin Cities. She is co-authoring a book on the history of sports facilities in the Twin Cities for the University of Minnesota Press. Her research interests include Scandinavian-American immigrant folk art and Norwegian-American altar paintings.

Kristin Anderson

Visit *naha.stolaf.edu* for details and to register.

IMAGES: (TOP) JON PLATEK; (RIGHT) PUBLIC DOMAIN, ANNO DOMKIRKEODDEN, UNKNOWN CREATOR; (BOTTOM) STEPHEN GEFFRE

THE NORWEGIAN HUSMANN SYSTEM

BY DALE HOVLAND

Primogeniture, the right of the eldest child to inherit wealth—had a significant influence on people's lives in Norway. Historically, the eldest son was priviliged in this way under the law, though it could be a daughter if there was no son. Farms were often kept whole and not divided into smaller pieces when they passed from generation to generation. When farms were divided, there was a limit to how far they could be divided and still provide sufficiently for the families living there. Eventually, the dividing had to come to a halt.

Ole Andreasen, second from left in this photo from the early 1910s, was a husmann for 50-some years at Mengshol in the Hedmark region of Norway, on the eastern shore of Lake Mjøsa.

As a result, younger siblings might have to find a different place to live and work when an older brother or sister took posession of the family farm. Some became *husmenn*, which can be translated as "cotters." The word is related to the word "cottage." A cotter lived in a small house or cottage on a farm and was dependent on that farm for a living. Husmenn were renters of a sort. They paid for their place on the farm in cash or goods or labor, or some combination of those things.

There were two categories of *husmann* in Norway. A *husmann med jord*, cotter with land, owned a house on the farm plus additional land for growing food or grazing animals. A *husmann uten jord*, cotter without land, had just a house. A *husmannsplass* was the cotter's physical place on the farm, and a husmann was sometimes referred to as a *plassmann*. (In Norwegian, there are always multiple spellings possible, so *husmand* and *plassmand* also show up in records.)

A *strandsitter* was like a husmann without land who lived on the coast. The life and work of a strandsitter were typically connected to the sea, as a sailor or fisherman.

Sometimes there was a formal contract between husmann and farm owner, but whatever form it took, their agreement benefited both of them. The husmann usually made an annual monetary payment for having his house on the land, and had to keep the house and fences in good shape. Generally, he and his family were required to do a specified amount of work for the landowner each year. If they did work beyond the requirements, the landowner paid them in goods and/or money. A husmann with land could raise crops or livestock on his little acreage, and usually was permitted to hunt and fish on the landowner's property and gather wood there for fencing and fuel. He might also be allowed to use the landowner's horse and equipment.

For the landowner, there was the assurance of having help at busy times, such as haying or harvest, or having help to clear more land. As noted, the farm owner also got rental income from his husmenn.

A husmann's agreement could be in place for a lifetime, but the landowner had the right to have the husmann vacate the property. If the family moved, their house, which they owned, could be dismantled and go with them. Or the house could be sold to another husmann. April 14 was considered the first day of the summer-half of the year, and in 1687, King Christian V of Denmark and Norway declared that date as *faredag* or *flyttedag*, travel day or moving day. In modern Norwegian law, it is still the default moving day for agricultural renters, it no other date is chosen.

NORWEGIAN AMERICANS AND THE BETHANY INDIAN MISSION

BY ANNA M. PETERSON

The Bethany Indian Mission operated near Wittenberg, in north-central Wisconsin, from 1884 to 1955. In many ways, the mission school was like other so-called Indian boarding schools. Starting in the late 19th century and continuing into the first half of the 20th, American Indian children were recruited or compelled to enroll in church- and government-run boarding schools so they could become assimilated in the predominant European-American culture, which included Christianization. What set the Bethany Mission apart from other Indian schools is that it was the only one run by Norwegian Lutherans.

Norwegian immigrants to the Upper Midwest were primarily engaged in agriculture, and this activity involved them in dispossessing American Indians of their lands. For the Norwegian Americans, recognition of their role in land-taking was one motivation for creating the Bethany Indian Mission in 1883. When Norwegian immigrant and Luther College graduate Even Johnson Homme first implored the Norwegian Synod to start a mission to serve American Indian tribes in Wisconsin, the synod rejected his proposal. But one year later, the synod reversed its decision, stating among its reasons that it "is right to begin a mission among the Indians since we occupy the land which was once their land, and we are obligated to them."

Led by the Church, Supported by the Government

Another Luther College graduate, Erick Olson Morstad, answered

IMAGES: (TOP) NAHA; (BOTTOM) WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, L. L. COOK COMPANY, CREATOR

(top left) Confirmands from the Bethany Mission took a group portrait in 1930. (bottom left) The school, shown in 1935, was one of many buildings on the mission property.

the call to serve as missionary and the Bethany Indian Mission started its work in 1884. Between 1884 and 1933, the mission functioned mainly as a boarding school where local tribes, primarily the Ho-Chunk and Oneida, but also Potawatomie, Ojibwe, Stockbridge-Munsee, and Menominee, sent their children to receive an education along with room and board. The Norwegian Synod Lutherans ran other foreign and domestic missions, most notably in China, Alaska, and Utah, but the Bethany Indian Mission stands out as the earliest mission the synod formed.

At Bethany, Norwegian immigrants and their descendants attempted to assimilate Indigenous children with the main goal of converting them to Christianity. The administrators and staff at the mission also made efforts toward broader cultural assimilation, but as historian and NAHA member Betty Bergland has noted in her examination of the Bethany Indian Mission, cultural differences were more accepted there than at federally run boarding schools, perhaps due to the foreign background of the settler-colonists running the Norwegian Lutheran mission. At federal schools, tribal affiliation, identity, and culture were specifically targeted for eradication.

Any attempt to draw a contrast between government-run schools and Bethany is complicated, however, by the fact that there were periods of time when the Norwegian Synod contracted with the federal government to run the school. From 1884 to 1888, the synod ran the school with no state involvement. From 1888 to 1900, the synod contracted with the federal government, which provided funding on a per-pupil basis. From 1900 to 1917, the federal government owned the mission land and buildings but hired synod representatives to operate Bethany. And from 1918 to 1933, the synod owned and operated both the mission and the school, including an extensive property with many buildings.

Mainstreaming and a Mixed Response

Until 1933, the main activity of the Bethany Mission was operating its boarding school for American Indian children. The mission grounds also included a chapel that held church services for the Indians, separate from the church services held at the Lutheran church in town.

After 1933, the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (NLCA), a successor to the Norwegian Synod, decided to close the boarding school at the Bethany Mission, and the American Indian students there were expected to attend local public schools alongside their overwhelmingly white-majority neighbors. This shift was in accordance with a change in federal government policy following the publication of the Meriam Report in 1928. The report concluded that boarding schools had failed in their goal to assimilate American Indians into white culture. It argued that public schools would be just as effective, if not more so, at educating Indian youth and integrating them into the dominant society. The Meriam Report resulted in the closure of many government and mission boarding schools across the country.

Of course, financial motivations also played a role in the NLCA's decision to close the Bethany Indian Mission boarding school. The year of the closure, 1933, was also the height of the Great Depression, when nearly a quarter of the U.S. population was unemployed. The NLCA, like other institutions, suffered during this period of economic crisis and found it difficult to maintain its missions both at home and abroad. Closing the boarding school was as much about economic necessity as it was about new thinking with regard to American Indian education.

While many educational reformers lauded the new integrationist policy, Indigenous children and their families had a more mixed response to the closing of Indian schools. The federal government's decision to close boarding schools came at a difficult time for Indian families, who often turned to the boarding schools as a source of support in periods of economic crisis. In the severe economic hardship of the Depression,

The Norwegian Synod and Its Successors

Norwegian Americans are known to have endured a lot of church conflict in the late 19th century when the Bethany Indian Mission was organized. There were doctrinal differences as well as disagreements over how much influence the Lutheran state church of Norway should have over Norwegian Lutheran congregations in the United States. As a result, there were several different synods of Norwegian Lutheran congregations in the late 1880s.

The Norwegian Synod, which founded the Bethany Mission, suffered a schism within itself over the question of whether a person's salvation was predestined. About a third of the synod's pastors and members left and merged with other synods to form the United Norwegian Lutheran Church. A later merger brought the UNLC into a new body called the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, or NLCA. After 1917, it was the NLCA that was responsible for running the Bethany Indian Mission. Further changes in church structure and naming during the 20th century made the NLCA part of today's ELCA, or Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. *—A. P.*

A Lutheran Truth and Healing Initiative

In 2016, the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) officially repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery, which has its roots in the pre-Reformation Catholic Church. For centuries, the Doctrine of Discovery has been the religious, political, and legal justification for seizing land not inhabited by Christians in 1493 and colonizing the peoples there.

In accordance with the repudiation, ELCA Bishop Elizabeth Eaton commissioned a Truth and Healing task force (*elca.org/truthandhealing*). The group is charged with understanding Lutheran participation in the Indian boarding school system, and particularly the Bethany Indian Mission. The task force began its work in 2022. So far, it is focused on research, gathering primary and secondary sources related to Lutheran involvement with boarding schools, which the task force will then share with the church, the federal government, and the impacted Indigenous tribes. *—A. P.*

Indigenous families sent their children to boarding schools in increasing numbers in the 1930s. In addition to economic factors, there were racial and social ones. Some Indigenous families preferred Indian boarding schools over public schools because of the intense racism that many of their children faced during the early years of integrated schooling.

After the boarding school ceased operation in 1933, the Bethany Mission's final superintendent, Ernest Sihler, found other ways to continue the assimilation of local American Indians until the mission closed altogether in 1955. Sihler implemented new programs, such as opening a religious summer school for Indian youth. He also cultivated relationships with Norwegian-American Lutheran colleges in an effort to connect former students from the mission with opportunities for higher education. In all, Sihler assisted 13 students in this way, the majority of whom were Ho-Chunk and attended Luther College.

An Era of Reconciliation

I have thought it important to explore the entwined histories of Luther College and the Bethany Indian Mission at this moment in time, when other institutions of higher learning are reckoning with their own pasts. Harvard and Georgetown universities, for example, are attempting to reconcile with their communities over the schools' past ties to slavery. At the same time, news of the discovery of mass graves and abuse at former Indian boarding schools is in the headlines.

What is clear from the research I've done is that Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, played a significant role in the history of the Bethany Indian Mission in Wisconsin. Both were founded and supported by people engaged in the work of building the Norwegian Synod and its missions at home and abroad. The college educated many of the pastors and teachers who served in instrumental positions at Bethany. In doing so, Luther College founders, faculty, students, and alumni supported a system designed to convert Indian youth to Lutheran Christianity and assimilate them into white culture, thereby distancing them from their own beliefs, cultures, languages, and communities.

Parish worker with children at Bethany Indian Mission, Wittenberg, Wisconsin, circa 1953.

IMAGE: ELCA ARCHIVES

Indigenous families also had a role in shaping the relationship between the Norwegian-American and Indian communities. They were not passive recipients of the church's missionary work or of Luther College's contributions to that work. They made use of the resources that were offered and cultivated the special relationship that developed between Luther and the Bethany Mission. For example, the nine Indigenous youth who pursued degrees at Luther College made use of the missionary context in which their families lived and of Sihler's connections to Luther to attain a level of education that was uncommon in their communities at that time, in the 1940s and '50s. While at Luther, they overcame challenges and adapted to the majority-white culture of the campus, but they also created support systems for themselves that helped them remain true to their tribal communities and identities, thereby reshaping their higher-education setting.

Luther College has been supportive of my scholarship on this topic. It has funded my research, including a year-long sabbatical. The college also has hosted my lecture on "Bethany and the Indian Mission," and published in its liberal arts' magazine, *Agora*, an article based on that lecture. My hope is that my research will inform the college and be a useful tool as Luther grapples with its past.

Anna Peterson is editor for the NAHA book program and the NAHA journal Norwegian-American Studies. *She is an associate professor of history at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.*

In the late 1910s and early 1920s, the mission raised awareness of its work and raised funds for its operations by selling souvenir pamphlets, first a Norwegian-language edition (top left), then an English-language version (below). Images of Indian students and of the mission campus were also made into post cards.

Archival Collections Related to the Bethany Indian Mission

Several archives house materials related to the history of the Bethany Indian Mission. Among them are the archives at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, the Evangelical Church in America in Elk Grove, Illinois, and NAHA. Relevant collections housed at NAHA include:

- P0683 Knut Gjerset Papers: Mission Institutions
- P0532 Wittenberg Schools & Indian Mission papers
- P0796 Torgeir Halvorson Haugan papers, 1864–1915

—A. P.

FOR FURTHER READING

Sources consulted for this article

- *A Brief History of the Bethany Indian Mission at Wittenberg, Wisconsin*, Luther Seminary, St. Paul (1944)
- Betty Bergland, "Settler Colonists, 'Christian Citizenship,' and the Women's Missionary Federation at the Bethany Indian Mission in Wittenberg, Wisconsin, 1884–1934," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie Shemo, eds., Duke Univ. Press, London (2010)
- Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln (1999)
- Anna Peterson, "'A Desire to Learn': Native-American Experiences in Lutheran Colleges, 1945–1955," *The American Indian Quarterly,* vol. 47, number 1 (2023)
- Ernest Sihler, "Christ for the Indians," pamphlet, Historical and Publicity Material, vol. 1, Bethany Indian Mission Collection, ELCA Region 3 Archives
- Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque (1999)
- C. Ylvisaker, Christian Anderson, and G. O. Lillegard, eds., *Grace for Grace: Brief History of the Norwegian Synod*, Lutheran Synod Book Company, Mankato (1943)

IMAGES: NAHA

from the archives

POEMS, STORIES, SONGS: CREATIVE WRITERS IN OUR COLLECTIONS

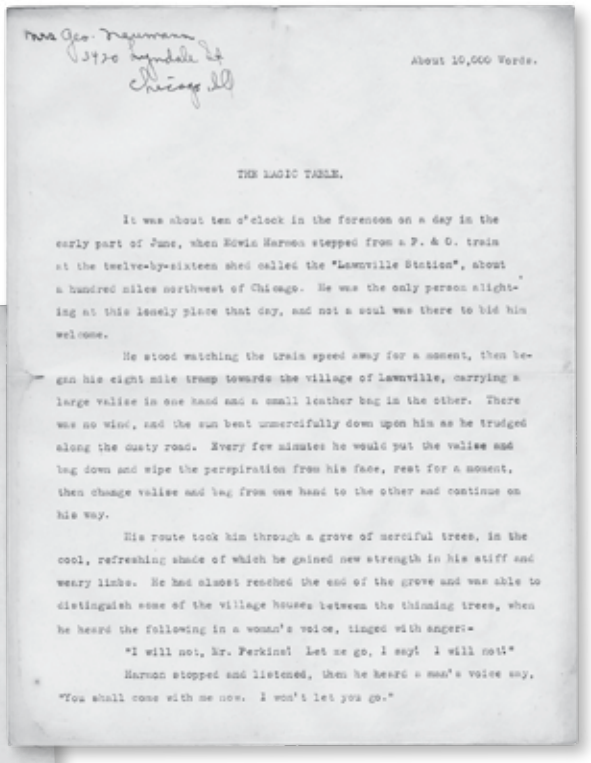
BY KRISTINA WARNER, ARCHIVIST

The NAHA archives are home to an extensive manuscript collection that includes many types of written material: letters, diaries, journals, ledgers, and other items related to Norwegians in America. But the archives also contain writings that are more creative. We hold numerous collections regarding writers of poetry and short stories.

GEORGE NEUMANN PAPERS

The Neumann collection includes written stories, poems, and plays by George Neumann, who was born in 1859 in Trondheim, Norway. He first worked in a rope factory, and later carried bricks to build a church in Trondheim. At the age of 15, he went to sea and worked as a cook on many ships, including the steamboat *Michael Krohn* and the steamer *Vidar*. Neumann later sailed as a steward on the *Einar* and spent 18 months making two trips to Buenos Aires, Argentina.

At age 18, on a voyage to Brunswick, Georgia, in the United States, Neumann and the ship's carpenter left their ship. They hid in the pinewoods for over a week without much food and waited for their vessel to depart. Neumann stayed on the southern coast for some time, sailing from there to the West Indies and Rio de Janeiro. In 1882, he went to Chicago and sailed on the Great Lakes for several years. Once he quit sailing, he learned plate printing at William Freund & Sons. Finding that he enjoyed writing stories and poems, Neumann won several prizes and had many of his works published in *Skandinaven*, a Norwegian-language newspaper in Chicago.



Mrs Geo. Neumann
3720 Lowndale Ct
Chicago Ill

About 10,000 Words.

THE MAGIC TABLE.

It was about ten o'clock in the forenoon on a day in the early part of June, when Edwin Harmon stepped from a P. & O. train at the twelve-by-sixteen shed called the "Lawnville Station", about a hundred miles northwest of Chicago. He was the only person alighting at this lonely place that day, and not a soul was there to bid him welcome.

He stood watching the train speed away for a moment, then began his eight mile tramp towards the village of Lawnville, carrying a large valise in one hand and a small leather bag in the other. There was no wind, and the sun beat unmercifully down upon him as he trudged along the dusty road. Every few minutes he would put the valise and bag down and wipe the perspiration from his face, rest for a moment, then change valise and bag from one hand to the other and continue on his way.

His route took him through a grove of merciful trees, in the cool, refreshing shade of which he gained new strength in his stiff and weary limbs. He had almost reached the end of the grove and was able to distinguish some of the village houses between the thinning trees, when he heard the following in a woman's voice, tinged with anger:-

"I will not, Mr. Perkins! Let me go, I say! I will not!"

Harmon stopped and listened, then he heard a man's voice say, "You shall come with me now. I won't let you go."

(top) The manuscript for George Neumann's story "The Magic Table"

(left) Portrait of George Neumann, from the personal collection of Larry Sizemore

MORE TO EXPLORE

- "The Poetry of Agnes Mathilde Wergeland," Larry Emil Scott, *Norwegian-American Studies,* volume 30, 1985
- Poems, 1840–1952, collection number P0316
- Papers of various authors in the NAHA archives, including Simon Johnson, Borghild Dahl, Waldemar Ager, Ole Rølvaag, Martha Ostenso

(above) "Let me sing freely, as does the bird," an illustrated poem by Tofteland, dated January 22, 1928

(right) Portrait of Tofteland seated, 1939

TILDA AKERSMYR TOFTELAND FAMILY PAPERS

Tilda Akersmyr Tofteland was born in November 1896 in Lyngdal, Vest Agder, Norway, to parents Alfred Finkelsen Akersmyr and Rakel Reime Akersmyr. She attended school in Lyngdal and Framnes, and she worked as a secretary until her marriage on April 4, 1925, to Reinert Tofteland. A few weeks later, in May 1925, the couple came to Luverne, Minnesota. They farmed nearby, in the tiny community of Kanaranzi, until 1958. Tilda Tofteland was a prolific writer of poems and articles, and composed many songs. She produced numerous watercolor and oil paintings. She was also a charter member of the Agderlag, a group of immigrants and their descendants from Agder County in Norway. She served as the group's secretary for 25 years.

Tofteland in Luverne, Minnesota, in 1930, in her Lyngdal *bunad*.

JOHANNES MAURITZSEN POEMS

Johannes Mauritzsen, born in 1823 in Bjerkreim, Rogaland, Norway, immigrated to America in 1850, at the age of 22. Once he arrived in the United States, he settled in Chicago, living there until his death in 1863. According to Lisabet Risa in *Bjerkreimboka*, Mauritzsen and his siblings emigrated based on correspondence between his father, Mauritz Halvorson, and Cleng Peerson, known as the father of Norwegian immigration.

Early in life, Mauritzsen created a book of poems, beginning at the age of 11, in 1839, and continuing until 1841. Throughout the book are a mix of his own original poems and poems by others that he copied out by hand. The texts are intermixed with drawings that are assumed to have been made by Mauritzsen, too.

Pages from Mauritzsen's leather-bound book.

(above) Drawings believed to be made by Johannes Mauritzsen are featured throughout his poetry book. The writing on the page indicates that it dates to 1841, when he was 13.

IMAGES: NAHA

Norwegian-American Historical Association

1510 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057
naha.stolaf.edu
email: naha@stolaf.edu
507-786-3221

Change Service Requested
Is your membership current? Check the expiration date above your address. Join or renew online at *naha.stolaf.edu*.

Currents

The newsletter of the Norwegian-American Historical Association

Volume 189, Fall 2023

Currents Editor
Denise Logeland

Currents Designer
Jill Adler Design

Norwegian-American
Historical Association
1510 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
FARIBAULT, MN
PERMIT NO. 21

WHAT WILL **YOUR LEGACY BE?**

LEGACY CIRCLE

WHEN YOU MAKE A PLANNED GIFT TO NAHA, YOU BECOME OUR PARTNER.

Together, we inspire connections to Norwegian-American experiences through discovery, scholarship, and stewardship. Your gift benefits NAHA, the greater Norwegian-American community, and generations of researchers to come.

Have you already included NAHA in your estate plans? Thank you! We want to recognize your generosity by including you in our Legacy Circle.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact NAHA Executive Director Amy Boxrud at *naha@stolaf.edu* or 507-786-3221.