

Currents

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORWEGIAN AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION | SPRING 2025 VOLUME 195

The Norwegians of New Netherland

Long before 1825, Norwegian colonists landed in New York



It's the People



When I began my work at NAHA, I had the great fortune of overlapping for a few days with my predecessor, the late Jackie Henry. When I asked her what she enjoyed most about the job, she answered without hesitation. “It’s the people,” she said. “I’ll miss all the members I connect with every day.”

It didn’t take long for me to understand what she meant. Since that day, NAHA members have become some of my favorite people. They are among the kindest and most inspiring lifelong learners I know.

As we celebrate our centennial year, it’s a time to look back and appreciate the many people who have supported and stewarded this organization over the years. We remember our founders, who had the vision to “collect and preserve relics and records which may throw light on the life and activity of the people of Norwegian birth and descent in America.” We also remember the 100 supporters who “expressed their approval” and “signed their names as charter members.” Over the years, members helped build the archives by donating their family materials and church and business records. And during the lean years of the

Great Depression, NAHA stayed afloat thanks to its members.

It’s also the people of NAHA who built the financial resources that fuel our work today. In the early years, members began building an endowed fund for operations. In the mid-20th century, they worked together to grow the publications endowment. When NAHA leadership identified the need for better climate control for our archives in 2014, members answered the call.

Now it’s our turn. Since we launched the centennial campaign to endow the NAHA archives, I’ve been reminded again and again of the dedication and generosity of our members. When we work together, we can accomplish great things!

During this centennial year, more than anything I’m looking forward to the people I’ll come in contact with. We’ve planned some exciting opportunities for our members to engage, enjoy, and learn together. Our Crossings and Connections conference in June will bring together members and scholars from the United States, Canada, and Norway. Please consider joining us! October’s tour to New York City with Vesterheim will be an opportunity for members of both institutions to share a historic moment, when we greet the *Restauration* replica as it arrives in the harbor. And on October 25, our centennial banquet in Minneapolis will be another opportunity for us to gather and celebrate the past and the future of NAHA.

Since our founding in 1925, it’s the people who have made NAHA what it is today. Thank you for being one of them!

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Boxrud". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Boxrud, Executive Director

ON THE COVER

This watercolor (circa 1660) shows the island of Manhattan as seen from the bay off its southern shore. The work, in the collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, is believed to be by Johannes Vingboons (circa 1616–1670), who was a cartographer for the Dutch West India Company.

2025 NAHA Fellowship Recipients

NAHA's fellowship program is possible thanks to generous financial gifts from our donors. Fellowships continue our mission: to inspire connections to Norwegian American experiences through discovery, scholarship, and stewardship. In our second year of awards, NAHA is pleased to announce these recipients:

PUBLICATIONS FELLOWSHIP



JoAnn Conrad
*Professor of Social
Sciences, Diablo Valley
College, CA*

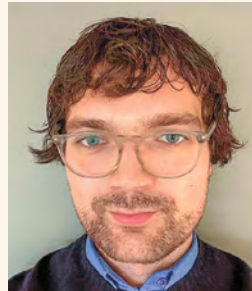
Shifting Portraits of
Norway in American
Children's Literature,
1900-1945

Conrad's project will trace the publishing histories of children's books about Norway that were written, translated, and/or illustrated from the turn of the 20th century to World War II. She will focus primarily on books produced by Norwegian American translators, and she will examine the roles that immigration and gender politics, as well as publishing trends and economics, have played in American representations of Norway.

"Researching the lives and work of Norwegian immigrant women authors and understanding their contributions in a larger political and social context entails using many disparate and unconventional sources, as their work has often been left out of conventional historiography," Conrad says. "The NAHA fellowship allows for the flexibility to uncover their hidden traces."

The Publications Fellowship is a \$2,500 award available for research in the field of Norwegian American studies, broadly defined. Priority goes to topics that meet the goals of our research prospectus and have potential to produce work publishable by NAHA.

ARCHIVES FELLOWSHIP



Mikael Lyngaas
*PhD candidate,
University of Oslo*

Scandinavian American
Socialism, 1880-1920

The Scandinavian American Socialist movement was fragmented and divided between two parties, the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Party of America. Lyngaas will produce a consolidated history of the Scandinavian American Socialist movement and provide insight into its culture, ideology, press activities, and political practices.

"I am very grateful to receive this fellowship, which will be of great help in further archival research for my PhD project. I'd like to thank the great people over at NAHA for their help during my archival research," Lyngaas says. He adds that he looks forward to seeing fellow NAHA members at the Crossings and Connections conference in June.

The Archives Fellowship is a \$2,000 award designated to promote new understandings of the Norwegian American experience. Preference is given to topics that are outlined in NAHA's research prospectus and that rely heavily on the NAHA archival collections.

OCTOBER 1, 2025

The annual application deadline for NAHA fellowships is October 1, and awards are made in January each year.

› Visit norwegianamericanhistory.org for details. • Contact us with questions. • Share information about our fellowship program with researchers.

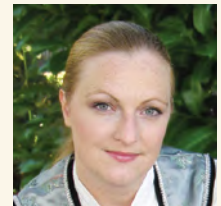


Crossings and Connections: A Conference to Explore Norwegian Migration Past and Present



This June, we hope you'll join NAHA on the St. Olaf College campus in Northfield, Minnesota, as we cohost Crossings and Connections, an international conference to mark the bicentennial of organized Norwegian migration to North America. Whether you are a seasoned scholar or simply curious about your Norwegian roots, this event is for you.

NAHA is partnering with NAHA-Norway, NORTANA (the Norwegian Teachers Association of North America), and the Norwegian Department at St. Olaf College to organize the conference. For those not able to attend the full Wednesday through Sunday event (June 18–22), we've put together a menu of à la carte registration options. We invite you to look for a plan flexible enough to meet your needs.



(clockwise from top) the Footnotes; soprano Laura Loge and pianist Steven Luksan; Valley Grove churches

JUNE 18–22, 2025

➤ To learn more and to register, visit the conference website, pages.stolaf.edu/cc2025/. Keep an eye on the site as updates and announcements are added in coming weeks.



CROSSINGS
NORWAY & NORTH AMERICA

1825 · 2025



Pre-Conference Tours

On Wednesday, June 18, choose from two tours. Explore the rich Lutheran church history of Rice and Goodhue counties with St. Olaf Professor Emerita of Religion DeAne Lagerquist, or join former NAHA Associate Archivist Jeff Sauve on a trip that highlights some of the region's other historical sites.

Conference Program Highlights

• Wednesday Evening

The conference begins with a reception and dinner. Afterward, soprano Laura Loge and pianist Steven Luksan will offer a concert, Musical Migration, showcasing music composed by Norwegian immigrants.

• Thursday through Saturday

Conference sessions will provide a dynamic exchange of ideas. More than 70 presenters from both sides of the Atlantic will take part. Our keynote speakers include Hisham Zaman, a Norwegian film director and screenwriter of Kurdish origin, who will expand our perspectives on migration. NAHA will launch a special exhibit to mark its own centennial, featuring highlights from its archives.

• Saturday Evening

Join us for a festive night. We'll enjoy a banquet at the historic Northfield Armory followed by entertainment from the Footnotes, a Scandinavian American old-time dance band from Decorah, Iowa.

• Sunday Post-Conference Events

Sunday offers a blend of learning and entertainment. Dana Kelly, executive director of the Norwegian American Genealogical Center and Naeseth Library in Madison, Wisconsin, will share her expertise during a class on family history research. A migration-themed film festival will run throughout the day, including the North American premiere of two Norwegian films.

Housing

On-campus housing is available as part of your conference registration. For those who prefer an alternative, a block of rooms has been reserved at the Fairfield Inn & Suites in downtown Northfield until May 6.

Board Spotlight

Scott Richardson

Northfield, Minnesota



Scott spent his professional career in community journalism, promotion of nonprofit organizations, and marketing and public relations in the health care sector. He is a member of the NAHA Executive Committee, serving as secretary. He also serves on the Development Committee.

WHY I SERVE: "Stories are the lifeblood of a culture. They form the basis of our identity. NAHA's work collecting and preserving stories about the Norwegian American experience is critical to helping us understand who we are and how we got here."

NAHA Board Service

NAHA board members contribute diverse skills, experience, and insights to our board. Every two years, NAHA identifies the needs of the organization before nominating a new slate of board members. Our next board election will take place in October 2026, at our biennial member meeting. In the meantime, we will gather names of prospective board members. If you are interested in serving on the board, or you would like to nominate someone else, please contact NAHA Executive Director Amy Boxrud.

OCTOBER 25, 2025

NAHA Centennial Banquet

You're invited to join fellow members and friends of NAHA on the evening of Saturday, October 25, 2025, for a celebration of our association's first 100 years. We'll gather at the University of Minnesota's McNamara Alumni Center in Minneapolis. Watch for your invitation. It will be on its way to you with additional details later this year.

SAVE
THE
DATE

The Norwegians of New Netherland



Ink drawing of New Amsterdam, created around 1650.

BY DENISE LOGELAND

For Norwegians willing to look beyond their homeland for opportunity, the place to go in the 1600s and 1700s was the Netherlands. That country's powerhouse economy offered abundant jobs, better pay, and, consequently for some, better marriage options than Norway did.

Along the Norwegian coast, especially in the south, the pull of the Netherlands was so strong that it stunted population growth, most clearly in present-day Agder. Historian Oddleif Hodne found that between 1650 and 1750, population growth in that region was only about one-sixth the growth in the rest of Norway, a difference he attributed to Netherlands migration in his widely cited but unpublished 1976 University of Oslo PhD thesis, "Fra Agder til Amsterdam."

Historian Frans-Arne Stylegar tells that in the late 1700s, it was still common for families in Norway's coastal settlements to send their sons and daughters to work in the Netherlands soon after they were confirmed. In Amsterdam, Hoorn, and other Dutch cities, they could sock away earnings to bring home to Norway, enabling them to buy a farm or otherwise improve their prospects as they began their adult lives. Stylegar

writes in a chapter for the book *På vandring og på flukt: migrasjon i historisk perspektiv* (In Wandering and In Flight: Migration in Historical Perspective) that young men often went to Holland to work as sailors or shipbuilders, but also for seasonal work in excavating, repairing dikes and canals, or as farm labor. Young women hired out as household help.

The roots of the migration were in trade, not only because trade and economic growth produced the jobs that attracted migrants, but because trade had created relationships and familiarity between the Norwegians and the Dutch. Since at least the early 1500s, the Dutch had turned to Norway for lumber to build their growing cities, merchant fleet, and navy. The Dutch bought countless shiploads of oak, pine, and spruce from Norway's southern forests, as well as fish, lobster, copper, and granite. In return, they sold the Norwegians grain, salt, spices, herring, textiles, wine, and other commodities that Dutch traders brought from around the world.

Some of Norway's migrants decided the Dutch life was the good life and never did go back home. Most of them settled in Dutch cities. But some found a place for themselves in the Netherlands' global network of trade and colonization.

Stylegar and others have focused on the Norwegians who lived in one Dutch colony in particular: New Netherland in what became New York state, and especially that colony's capital, New Amsterdam.

During this year's bicentennial of the sailing of the sloop *Restauration* from Stavanger to New York, attention will go to the Norwegians who landed on Manhattan in 1825. It's an opportune time to recall others from Norway who lived on the island two centuries earlier.

Trijntje, the Midwife

Trijntje Jonas was living at the southern tip of Manhattan, in the Dutch settlement of Nieuw Amsterdam, at least as early as 1643 (and probably a decade earlier, we'll see). Her parcel of land on the island was granted to her that year by the Dutch West India Company, according to a map of the settlement.

Jonas worked for the West India Company as a midwife to the other colonists. And while she had migrated to New Netherland from the old Netherlands, she was Norwegian.

One record, from 1639, refers to her as "Trijn Jonas van Masterlant," meaning "from Masterlant." Stylegar explains that it's a reference to present-day Marstrand. That's a Swedish city now, but in the early 1600s, Marstrand was part of the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway, which extended southeast to the Göta River and Göteborg (Gothenburg).

Another record, the baptism of her daughter Anneke, ties Trijntje Jonas to "Vlecker." That's Flekkerøy in Kristiansand, Norway, on the coast of Agder County, as Stylegar explains in his book *The First Norwegian Americans: Immigrant Lives in New Amsterdam, 1624-1674*.

Other records place Jonas in the Netherlands. In 1623, she was in Amsterdam, both as a betrothal witness for her daughter Marritje and for the baptism of a granddaughter that Anneke had given birth to. But within a few years, Trijntje Jonas crossed the Atlantic. She likely made the trip in the spring of 1630, Stylegar writes, traveling with her daughters, Anneke and Marritje, and with Anneke's husband, Roelof Jansen (also from "Masterlant"). He was newly contracted that year to work for the Dutch West India Company in New Netherland.

Jonas died sometime between 1645 and 1647. But through her daughters, her family rose to prominence in early New York history. Marritje was widowed twice and married a third time with the merchant Govert Loockermans, one of the

wealthiest men in the colony at the time. Anneke also was widowed, and when she remarried, it was with the head of the Reformed Church in New Netherland, Pastor Everardus Bogardus. Widowed a second time, Anneke died in 1663, and her children inherited the farmland on Manhattan that had belonged to her through her first husband.

New Amsterdam was captured by the British in 1664 and was rechristened New York. A few years later, Anneke's heirs sold their Manhattan farmland to the British governor Francis Lovelace. The land became a possession of the British crown, and around the turn of the 18th century, it was given to the Trinity congregation, which built an Episcopal church there, at the intersection of Broadway and Wall Street.

Anneke Jans's many descendants became famous—infamous, really—for a series of lawsuits they brought over more than 150 years, into the early 1900s. On the premise that the original sale by Anneke's children had not been properly executed, they tried and failed again and again to claw back part of the value of Anneke's farmland, which had become some of the world's most coveted real estate.

Much Better Pay from the Dutch

Sølvi Sogner gives an example of the financial incentive for Norwegians to work in the Netherlands in her 1994 book *Ung i Europa: norsk ungdom over Nordsjøen til Nederland i tidlig nytid* (Young in Europe: Norwegian Youth Across the North Sea to the Netherlands in the Early Modern Age), where she focuses on migration between the Stavanger region and Dutch cities. Sogner writes that tax records from 1711 in Norway's Birkreim Parish show average annual pay—partly in cash, partly in clothing—of 1.25 *riksdaler* for a woman working as live-in household help. In Amsterdam, which had developed a more liquid, cash-based economy by then, a housekeeper could make the equivalent of 12 to 40 *riksdaler* for her year's work. —D. L.

1



The West India Company as a Force in Migration

The West India Company, central to the migration of Trijntje Jonas and her family, also prompted the journeys of other Norwegians to New Netherland.

Formed in 1621, the company was a monopoly set up by Dutch investors to control various trade routes in the western hemisphere, including the slave trade in West Africa and the fur trade—especially beaver—in eastern North America. Private Dutch traders had competed with each other, but now the company was a unified front aimed at shutting out the Spanish and the English.

The region around the Hudson, Delaware, and Connecticut rivers quickly went from a trading base to a colony. The West India Company sent people to New Amsterdam: carpenters to build houses, soldiers to provide protection, and so on. To help populate the rest of New Netherland, the company

awarded patroonships. These were large land grants given to company investors. In return for his land, a patroon promised to recruit and send over 50 or more colonists to occupy and work the land.

The land already was occupied, of course, by American Indians, a fact the colonizers largely brushed aside, which led to later conflicts. A West India Company governor of New Netherland, Peter Minuit, negotiated with the Lenape people to purchase the island they knew as Mannahatta. Historians broadly agree, though, that the Lenape, unfamiliar with the idea of land ownership, only intended to let the Dutch share in using the island.

2



3



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

- 1 A 19th century map details land ownership in New Amsterdam. The area where the Dutch fort stood, at the tip of Manhattan, is still called "the Battery."
- 2 A genealogy chart (age unknown) of Anneke Jans and Everardus Bogardus shows their portraits.
- 3 Trinity Church in Manhattan, October 1952.

Trips and Return Trips

A striking thing about the New Netherland colonists is their mobility. One, a woman named Maritien Jans, traveled back to Norway when it was time to collect an inheritance there. Another, sailor Roelof Carstensen, a Norwegian from Flekkerøy, returned to Amsterdam at age 23, having lived in New Netherland for five years already.

Harmen Hendrickszen from Bergen was a soldier for the West India Company in Brazil before he came to New Amsterdam and married the daughter of another Norwegian there. When she was later banished from the colony (for insulting an official) the couple went to the Netherlands. But they crossed the Atlantic again when they were allowed to return to New Netherland and lived out their days there. —D. L.

Roelof Jansen, who came with his family in 1630, had contracted to work for the patroon Kiliaen van Rensselaer, Stylegar writes. Rensselaer was granted land on both sides of the Hudson River—much of present-day Albany and Rensselaer counties in New York. He hired Jansen to build and manage a farm for him called de Laetsburg. But when the contract expired in 1634, neither man was eager to renew it. Jansen moved with his family (including his mother-in-law Trijntje) to New Amsterdam. Other tenant farmers and workers brought over by the West India Company followed a similar pattern, writes Stylegar, soon opting for independence and working for themselves as farmers, traders, or craftspeople.

More Archival Material, More Stories

One of the earliest examples of the West India Company seeking Norwegian workers shows up in a 1626 letter. In his report to the company's leaders, a colonial secretary in New Netherland suggested that they send over more people like "Oelle Pouwelsen," who knew how to make tar, a product needed for preserving wooden buildings and ships. Stylegar quotes from the letter:

"With regard to producing tar, as in Norway, this is undoubtedly possible, as there are as good pine trees here as there . . . I do not doubt that if it should please Your Gentlemen to send over 10 or 12 Norwegians, such as Oelle, who have knowledge of it, we could send over [to Amsterdam] 200 to 300 loads [of tar] annually, in addition to beams and boards that could be cut and sawn of the trees, as only the roots and tops are used in tar production."

Stylegar names Oelle and 69 other Norwegians in New Netherland in his 2016 book, *The First Norwegian Americans*—which he describes as an "update" of a book written 100 years earlier. In 1916, John Oluf Evjen, a theology professor at Augsburg Seminary in Minneapolis, published his own book on New Netherland (see "Further Reading"), where he identified about 57 Norwegians.

Stylegar writes that he was able to add to Evjen's "admirable work" because of the different eras in which they did their research. New material came to light that Evjen didn't have. One example Stylegar gives is the New Netherland Project (now the New Netherland Research Center), a collaborative effort begun in 1974 by the New York State Library to translate and publish early Dutch colonial documents. The National Archives of the Netherlands joined the project in 2009.

In this respect, the story of the Norwegians in New Netherland is also a story about archives.

Sølvi Sogner, the University of Oslo history professor who wrote about Norway-Netherlands migration (see sidebar on page 7), called herself part of a second wave of scholars who were inspired to investigate the topic when "new sources became available" in the 1970s. Sogner credited this to Simon Hart, who was then chief archivist at Amsterdam's municipal archives. Hart initiated a long-term project of cataloging and making accessible more of the city's massive store of records—"no ordinary city archive," Sogner observed, but "an archive for an international commercial mastadon of a city."

Stylegar found, as he researched his book, that while much had been done with the Amsterdam archives, there was still much left to be unearthed there. It could mean that more stories will surface about the Norwegians in New Netherland. ●

Editor's Note: This article originated with a suggestion from NAHA member Marilyn Sorensen, who generously shared her earlier research on the topic.

Further Reading

- John Oluf Evjen, *Scandinavian Immigrants in New York 1630-1674*, K. C. Holter Publishing Co., Minneapolis, 1916. Available digitally at no cost via the Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/scandinavianimmi02evje/mode/2up>
- Frans-Arne Stylegar, *The First Norwegian Americans: Immigrant Lives in New Amsterdam 1624-1674*, (originally published as *Nieuw Amsterdam: nordmenn i det hollandske amerika 1624-1674*, Commentum forlag, Sandnes, 2016). English-language version available from online booksellers
- Four short articles in English about 17th century Norway-Netherlands trade and migration are available on the website of the Maihaugen Museum in Lillehammer, Norway. They are part of an online exhibit about an increase in Dutch migrants to rural Norway in recent decades: <https://www.opam.no/nettutstilling/nederland/en/history> —D. L.

2024 in Review

BY KRISTINA WARNER, NAHA ARCHIVIST

The NAHA archives are home to an extensive manuscript collection that includes many types of written materials: letters, diaries, journals, ledgers, and other items related to Norwegians in America.

During 2024, we had a busy year of hosting researchers from the United States, Canada, and Norway in our reading room; working with student interns and classes at the institution that houses us, St. Olaf College; digitizing some of our primary source materials; and welcoming new donations to our collections.

Grants

We are thankful to receive grant funding to help us share the important legacy of Norwegians in North America contained in our collections. Many thanks to the Sons of Norway Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the State of Minnesota through its Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Donations

The collections in the NAHA archives grow yearly, thanks to donated materials. Our gratitude goes to those who have contributed and continue to contribute these important primary sources. Donations in 2024 included:

- **House of Norway records**

The House of Norway, located at Balboa Park in San Diego, was built for the 1935–36 California Pacific International Exposition. It was one of 16 bungalows occupied by 26 ethnic groups for the exposition. Together, they formed the House of Pacific Relations—with “pacific,” in this case, referring to their mission of promoting peaceful relationships among the world’s people. The House of Norway is still active as a nonprofit organization. Its mission continues to be the promotion of peace, as well as knowledge of and advancement of Norwegian and Norwegian American culture. The group’s donated records include scrapbooks, photographs, and a historical account of the House of Norway.

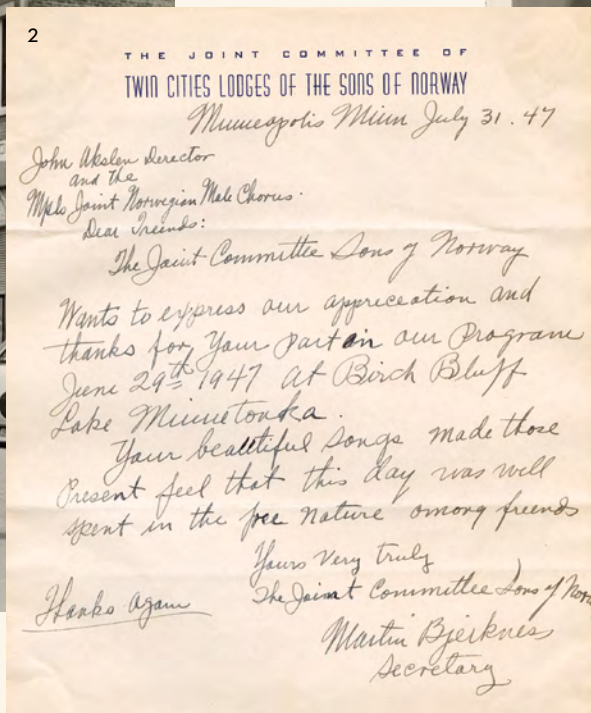
- **David C. Mauk papers**

These include the typescript, collected oral histories, and photographs that were part of Mauk’s work on his book *Heart of the Heartland*, an in-depth study of the Norwegian American community of Minneapolis–St. Paul and its complex role in the economic, political, and cultural life of the Twin Cities over more than 170 years. Mauk’s project began in 1995 and culminated with the publication of the book in 2022.

- **Daughters of Norway of the Pacific Coast papers**

The Grand Lodge of the Daughters of Norway of the Pacific Coast was founded on February 20, 1908, by three independent Daughters lodges in the state of Washington: Valkyrien Lodge 1 (Seattle, founded 1905), Embla Lodge 2 (Tacoma, 1907), and Freya Lodge 3 (Spokane, 1907). The Grand Lodge records donated to NAHA contain meeting minutes, pamphlets, photographs, scrapbooks, histories, and newsletters of the Daughters of Norway of the Pacific Coast. Today, the organization has a different name and has lodges throughout the West and Midwest of the United States. In 1950, when the Grand Lodge of the Daughters of Norway of the Midwest voted to join the Sons of Norway organization, the Daughters on the Pacific Coast voted to remain a separate and independent organization. In 1956, the Pacific Coast group changed its name and became simply Daughters of Norway.





More 2024 Contributors to the Archives

Jill Beaty	Mary Martin
Johan Bergh	Debbie Miller
Mary Dalbotten	Karen Nasby
Kim Donaldson	John Nilson
Marnie Elmer	Elaine Nordlie
Scott Elmer	Mike Palecek
Eleanor Fedde Grant	Mary Pellegrini
Joan Felice	Jacquelin Pels
Sharon Fortunak	John Peterson, for
Dennis Gimmetstad	Gudbrandsdalslaget
Bruce Gjovig	Ben Popp, for the
Arne Halvorson	American Birkebeiner
Elaine Hastleton	Ski Foundation
Blaine Hedberg	Cynthia Rubin
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Clifford Henjum	Jerry Solberg
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Sheryl Hove,	Martha Taylor
for Telalaget	Arlen Twedt
Keith Jamtgaard	Ingrid Urberg
Gwen Jones	Jeff Wallager
Greg Lane	Todd Walsh
Ann Marie Legreid	Anonymous (9)
Valborg Linn	

FROM THE TOP LEFT

1-2 Scrapbook items from the Norwegian Glee Club of Minneapolis are found in the David Mauk collection.
3-5 A House of Norway scrapbook holds photos and a pass from the 1936 California Pacific Exposition.
6 "For use at appropriate occasions," says the cover of a 1923 Daughters of Norway songbook.



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Currents Newsletter

Volume 195, Spring 2025
Denise Logeland, Currents Editor
Jill Adler Design, Currents Designer

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Please join us!



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