

The Norwegian-American Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota

From the NAHA Office to the Association Members

NEWS



LETTER

NUMBER 138

SUMMER 2010

NAHA'S 85TH BIRTHDAY: A CHANCE TO CELEBRATE THE PAST AND LOOK TOWARDS THE FUTURE

In 1925, when a passionate and energetic group of Norwegian Americans decided to form a national center to preserve the history of their ancestors and all immigrants from Norway to the United States of America, they envisioned an organization dedicated to scholarship, accuracy, and liveliness. The organization they were determined to create was one that would become a hub of knowledge for people all around the country - and the world - who wanted to know the stories of this group that has so enriched the history of the United States. With these lofty goals, the Norwegian-American Historical Association was formed.

Eighty-five years later, it is exciting to see how this dream has become a reality. NAHA has collected and organized an archive of countless articles, records, and photographs, published nearly one hundred scholarly books, grown to include over 2000 members, and become internationally recognized and respected. Most importantly, NAHA has truly attained its goal of becoming an organization that honors and celebrates the history of Norwegian Americans. NAHA could not have done all of this without the help of each and every member during the last 85 years, and the growth and achievements of the association should be celebrated!

NAHA's 85th birthday party is a time for every NAHA member, whose contributions keep this organization alive, to gather and reflect on what we've accomplished together.

But the work of the Norwegian-American Historical Association is certainly not over. It's time to celebrate what we've done but also to see what new directions the association can take to propel us into the next 85 years. NAHA's mission of collecting, preserving, and interpreting the Norwegian-American part of the United States' history carries on into the future, and it is with great anticipation that we move into a new era as an association.

NAHA's 85th year also marks an important change in our staff. After thoroughly considering each of the finalists for the position of Administrative Director for NAHA, and listening to the very helpful comments of each Board Member, the Executive Committee decided unanimously to offer the position to Jackie Henry, who is currently employed as Director of Advancement Services at St. Olaf College. Jackie has accepted the position and will bring great enthusiasm and experience to NAHA. Her work at the College has involved significant support for fundraising and those are skills that I believe she can put to great advantage for NAHA. We are looking forward to Jackie's arrival in early September.

I hope you all will join me in thanking Catherine Cleland for her outstanding work for NAHA, particularly over the past 20 months since Kim Holland's departure. She has been an exceptional employee and we wish her the very best.

To help us look ahead to the growth of NAHA in the upcoming years, we would be honored to have you join us at our Biennial Meeting and 85th Birthday Party. Come help us celebrate how far we've come and move forward with anticipation for the future!

Jack Tunheim
NAHA President

ARCHIVES NEWS

The archivists attended a workshop focused on "Letters of Migration" at the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC) of the University of Minnesota on May 18, 2010. The workshop was part of a conference focused upon the creation at the IHRC of a website with digital copies and translations of immigrant letters from many different ethnic groups in North America between 1850 and 1970. The website will be a resource for teachers, students, family history researchers and others who are interested in the history

and the stories found in immigrant letters. The workshop gave the archivists an opportunity to learn about other ethnic archival collections in the US and Canada (Italian, German, Ukrainian, Estonian, Finnish, Polish, Czech and Slovak, for instance) and to interact with other scholars and archivists who use and care for immigrant letters.

Watch for additions, later this summer, to the Norwegian-American images at <http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/archives/noramimages.html>. The initial one hundred historical images of Norwegian-American life and culture from Minnesota will soon be joined by an additional one hundred images from Wisconsin. Included are images from the Rossing family and store in Argyle, from Gale College and Stoughton Academy, from the Ole Felland collection, and from the New Richmond tornado of 1899. The images will be searchable in a variety of ways, including by county, with Dane and Lafayette Counties being particularly well represented.

NAHA members who visit the St. Olaf campus will be interested to know that the college's distinctive 18th-century Norwegian clock has been restored and can be viewed in the president's office suite. This unique and valuable tall-case clock, made *circa* 1779, was given to the college by Christian J. Golee (1890-1950), a prominent Norwegian immigrant businessman of Evanston, Illinois. It also features Gudbrandsdalen style rosemaling. The conservation work was done by Mr. Robert Tjaden of Apple Valley, MN under a grant from the Ella and Kaare Nygaard Foundation.

FROM THE NAHA ARCHIVES

The following was recently donated to NAHA by Norman Pietan, Mankato, Minn. The essay, "The Keys" (see below), was written by Eric Lien Houlder, ca. 1960. Few items exist in the archives written by adolescents that tell of the Norwegian-American experience. His mother, Dr. Marie Lien, was a professor of art (specializing in Scandinavian art) at the University of Minnesota. Marie's father, Jonas Lien, was an inventive engineer for American Electric Power, formerly American Gas and Electric Company in New York City (see NAHA publication, *Saga in Steel and Concrete* by Dr. Kenneth Bjork, pg. 398).

Remarks by Pietan:

Eric Lien Houlder was born in 1948 and was growing up as a blond, blue-eyed Scandinavian type of boy, tall and thin for his age. He was also very intelligent; the brightest in his class at school in Berkeley,

California, and the boy whom one would expect to become an important scientist or writer when older. In addition, though, Eric was sensitive and shy—the kind of boy that bullies like to pick on and beat up. So he did not have a happy life, and unfortunately lived only for 13 years.

He died when he was visiting his Uncle Paul Lien's farm in upstate New York. Eric and a friend his age were out on a boat on a nearby lake, rowing and swimming on a sunny July day. Apparently they were not aware that the water was so shallow at that particular place in the lake. This time when Eric dived his head hit a rock and he was instantly killed. In the years since, I have felt the loss of that highly talented young man.

Sometime later his mother, Marie, sent me a copy of something he had written earlier, called "The Keys".

The Keys

By Erik Lien Houlder

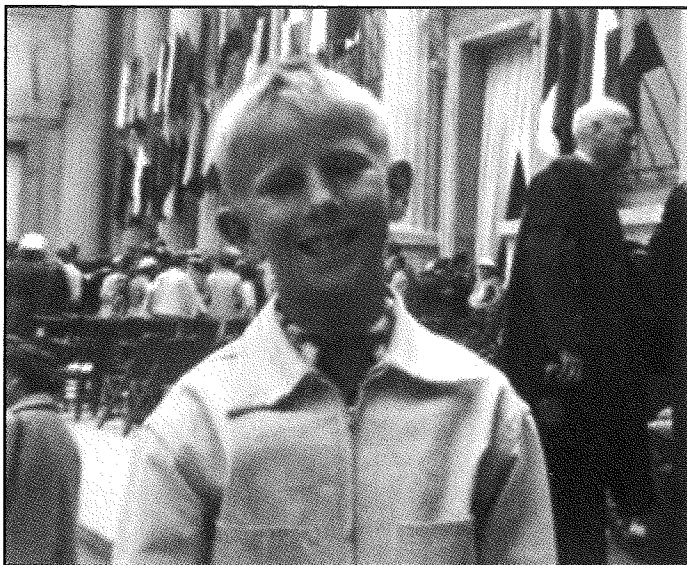
I never owned anything important until Bestefar died. Then I found a set of his keys, very large and very small keys, handmade keys. They were from "home." Bestefar was what I called my grandfather from Norway. He was supposed to be old and unpopular but he was the only one I knew who was interested in the future. He talked atomic energy and lasers and even time-space. Somehow he knew oceanography would soon be the "in" thing and bought me a microscope that was for a pro and not a kid. He could send a mind soaring.

When Bestefar died last year everything disappeared in his house. The Salvation Army came and took his custom tailored suits. That was the last. I looked everywhere for something forgotten that I could keep in my pocket like the watch Bestefar held in his hand when we talked time-space. Mostly I hoped for his violin. He used to hide that in a closet and only played for me private like. When he bowed those strings the sounds were so soft it cut right through my heart. He must have been thinking about Norway.

More than anything I wanted to find that violin. I wanted to see if I could get back those sounds. They were Bestefar's sounds of "home" and they were my sounds of Bestefar.

I never located that violin. But I found a set of Bestefar's keys, very large and very small keys, old keys from "home." Sometime I must go to Norway and see what I can unlock with those keys. I never owned anything important until Bestefar died.

Eric Lien Houlder was buried, age thirteen, in Norway near the birthplace of his Bestefar.



SOME RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE ARCHIVES (NOT COMPREHENSIVE)

- Added to Collection P1395: Memoirs by Ivar Ramseth (handwritten, photocopied, and bound, 93 pages, n.d.)
- Added to Collection P570 (Norwegian-American Singing Societies Papers). Sanger Hilsen: Photographs and Recordings of the Normanna Male Choir of Duluth, MN (1940s-50s) and Viking Male Choir of Cloquet, MN (1978-87). 3 CDs, prepared by Christopher Susag.
- Added to Collection P565 (Norway during WW II Papers): Scandinavian Resistance books and papers (collected by and written by Paul Wehr, Univ. of Co.)
- Added to Collection P785 (Camp Nidaros [Fergus Falls/Ottertail Lake] Papers): "If Cabins Could Talk," a history of Camp Nidaros, written by its residents, compiled by Beverly and Stanley Satre, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary celebration, July 18-19, 2009.
- Received April 2010 from Louise Stockman, Vancouver, WA, via John Bye, Institute for Regional Studies & University Archives, NDSU: Aandahl Family papers. Includes more than 150 family letters, 1882-1906. Family emigrated from Åndalsnes, Norway in 1881 and settled in Barnes County, North Dakota. Son, Fred Aandahl, served as Governor of N.D. from 1945 to 1950.
- Received May 2010 from Vivian (Lee) Engebrit, Savage, MN: Olav Lee Family papers. Olav Lee attended Luther College and later served on the faculty at St. Olaf College. Family genealogy records and col-

lected research. Collection includes two photo albums with images dating from 1875-1925. Images include Luther and St. Olaf as well as Lee and F. A. Schmidt families and descendants.

USING THE ARCHIVES IN PERSON

We ask that all visitors call (507-786-3229) or e-mail (naha-archivists@stolaf.edu) in advance to make an appointment. Our public hours are generally 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, and afternoon appointments can also often be made on week-days. However, the archivists do have work that takes them outside the archives; and vacation days, illnesses, and special events require occasional closures. Advance appointments minimize disappointments and help the archivists plan their work. The presence of several volunteers with family history expertise on Thursdays provides us with superior staffing on that day. We also appreciate advance notice of what materials visitors will request: this can easily be done by using Leif to identify appropriate items and by e-mailing the information to the archivists. We will try to help visitors without appointments to the extent that other work allows, but we cannot always guarantee that any help will be available or even that the archives will be open. Use of the archives is free for current NAHA members; lapsed memberships may be renewed at the beginning of a visit. Non-members pay a daily fee of \$15.00 or may join NAHA upon arrival. Visitors should bring coins for any copying to be done.

WE FONDLY REMEMBER...

Randi Dammerud Mitchell 1944 – 2010

It is with sorrow that we share the news of Randi Mitchell's death on June 7, 2010 in Minneapolis from an aggressive blood disorder. Many of our members will remember Randi as the Assistant Secretary in the NAHA office in the early 1980s, taking on that position after Elaine Kringen's retirement, and before Ruth Crane took over in 1986.

Randi was born 13 March 1944 in Oslo, Norway, during the German occupation of World War II. She met her future husband, Mancel Mitchell, when he attended the Oslo Summer School and remained in Norway for the following school year. After their marriage she immigrated to Minnesota. Prior to her posi-

tion at NAHA she worked at the Norwegian Consulate in the Foshay Tower in Minneapolis. She remained vitally interested in the Norwegian-American community of the Twin Cities, and NAHA held a special place in her affections.

As the family stated in her obituary, "Randi was a citizen of the world, who created beauty in all our lives, an artist of many talents, a lover of nature, her golden retriever, Tober, and friends throughout the world. Her credo was, 'God Bless the World, No Exceptions'".

Randi is survived by her husband Mancel Jr.; daughter Lise (Curt) Wall; sons Mancel III (Sarah) and Erik (Jenny); her six beloved grandchildren, Evan, Sawyer, Audrey, Markus, Helen, and Henry; her brother Leif (Berit) Dammerud; and extended family in Norway.

A memorial service was held on June 19, at Chapel Hills United Church of Christ, Edina.

~Ruth Hanold Crane

Dorothy Burton Skårdal

Dorothy Burton Skårdal died on June 10, 2010, following a long illness. She was nearly 88 years old. With Ingrid Semmingsen and Kjetil A. Flatin, and with the encouragement and assistance of Professor Odd S. Lovoll, she founded the Norway Chapter of The Norwegian-American Historical Association.

A native of Omaha, Nebraska, Dorothy Burton Skårdal was the granddaughter of Swedish immigrants to that state. After graduating from Middlebury College in Vermont, she took a Master's degree at Radcliffe College and a doctorate in History of American Civilization at Harvard University. She married Olav Skårdal, a Norwegian, and moved permanently to Norway in 1953. Beginning in 1965, she taught American Studies at the University of Oslo, where she became Senior Lecturer at the American Institute, teaching American Literature and Background. She studied Scandinavian immigrant literature in historical archives in the American Middle West and in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Based on her doctoral dissertation, her book *The Divided Heart: Scandinavian Immigrant Experience through Literary Sources* was published in 1974. Her dissertation advisor was the distinguished Professor Oscar Handlin of Harvard University.

Dr. Skårdal was an enthusiastic supporter of The Norwegian-American Historical Association, Nordmanns-Forbundet (The Norse Federation), The Norway-America Association (NORAM), and The Norwegian Emigrant Museum and Research Center near Hamar.

Funeral services were held on Friday, June 18. She was preceded in death by her husband Olav and is survived by two daughters.

SAVE THE DATE!

85 Years and Going Strong

Norwegian-American Historical Association
Biennial Membership Meeting

When: Saturday, October 23, 2010.

Time: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Where: St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN

Join the board, staff, and fellow NAHA members for an exciting day of celebration and information.

Highlights include the luncheon with a special speaker and several workshop sessions to choose from—one before and one following the luncheon. Music will be provided during registration by the group Geitost.

The membership meeting in the afternoon will present information on the Association's current projects and will end with election of directors. The new Board of Directors will then elect its officers to lead NAHA for the next two-year period.

We will wind up the celebration with birthday cake and a book fair following the membership meeting. The book fair will feature authors who have used the NAHA archives in their research.

We hope you will join us for a delicious lunch, interesting workshops and speakers, and the membership meeting and that you will take advantage of the opportunity to meet authors and have your books signed.

Please return the enclosed registration form by Oct 18.

We look forward to seeing you at Buntrock Commons, St. Olaf College, on Saturday, October 23.

In honor of NAHA's *85 Years and Going Strong*, we suggest donations in amounts such as \$8,500, \$850, \$85, \$18.50, \$8.50—or use your imagination for an appropriate gift.

Norwegian-American Historical Association—Biennial Membership Meeting
When: **Saturday, October 23, 2010 9:00 am to 4:00 pm**
Where: St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN

I (we) will attend the membership meeting

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION (e-mail, phone) _____

Sorry, I am not able to attend the meeting, but I enclose a birthday gift to NAHA _____

Schedule of events: (Place an X by those events you plan to attend)

9:00-9:45 Registration and coffee in the Buntrock Commons Crossroads _____

10:00-10:45 Welcome and announcements in the Viking Theater _____

11:00-11:45 Breakout sessions _____

Session I NAHA and web resources for family history _____

Session II Stories of Norwegian-American women _____

12:00-1:45 Lunch with speaker _____

NAHA recognitions _____

1:45-2:30 Breakout sessions _____

Session III Stories of NAHA publications _____

Session IV Stories from the archives _____

2:45-3:15 Membership meeting, reports and election of board _____

3:15-4:00 Birthday cake _____

Book fair and author book signing _____

Registration fee of \$10 to attend events from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm _____

Registration for the lunch and speaker \$20 _____

Happy 85th birthday NAHA donation _____

TOTAL _____

In honor of NAHA's *85 Years and Going Strong*, we suggest donations in amounts such as \$8,500, \$850, \$85, \$18.50, \$8.50—or use your imagination for an appropriate gift.

Please make out checks to NAHA and indicate that this is for the biennial meeting. If you would like to pay with your credit card you can access Paypal through our website www.naha.stolaf.edu

Please detach and return by October 18 to:

NAHA

St. Olaf College

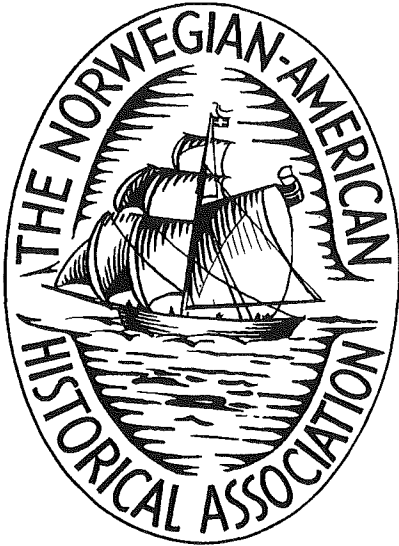
1510 St. Olaf Avenue

Northfield, MN 55057

Norwegian-American Historical Association
St. Olaf College
Northfield, Minnesota 55057
www.naha.stolaf.edu
507-786-3221

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

Change Service Requested



THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

\$500-\$1,000

Norman Erickson • Frank Tysver

\$201-\$500

Luther O. Forde • Rev. Richard Halom • Kermit
Hanson

\$101-\$200

Adrienne S. Morrison • Dr. Allan Sortland

\$51-\$100

R.W. Anderson • Janet K. Geronime • Dr. Frederic A.
Giere • Stan Hultgren • Joan Martone • Frederic J.
Peterson • John C. Reese • S/N Wergeland Lodge #28
• Arne Sovik • *Judge John R. Tunheim*

\$5-\$50

Carol Burckhardt • Bernt B. Johnson • Solveig Lee
Ken Moenck • Michael Oiseth • Rudolph A. Ramseth
• John Thorpe

Special Donations

Dr. Frederic A. Giere – In memory of good friend
Lloyd Hustvedt

Kermit Hanson – In memory of Helen C. Hanson

Ken Moenck – In honor of Halldor Sandvin

Adrienne S. Morrison – In honor of Thelma
Bendickson

Judge John R. Tunheim – Honorarium from Norwegian
Lutheran Memorial Church

Italicized denotes NAHA Board Members