

# The Norwegian-American Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota

# NEWS



# LETTER

*From the NAHA Office to the Association Members*

NUMBER 130

EDITOR, KIM HOLLAND

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## NAHA'S ROWBERG COLLECTION

While there are many collections of interesting material at the Norwegian-American Historical Association, without a doubt one of most used collections at NAHA is the "Rowberg Collection."

What is the Rowberg Collection? The Rowberg Collection is a treasure trove of information for family historians and scholars of all varieties. The clipping collection started in 1914 as simply obituaries of Norwegians and Norwegian Americans who died in the United States. Today the Rowberg Collection has evolved and grown to include clippings of achievements, stories, and news events that involve Norwegian Americans.

Andrew Ansel Rowberg was born on May 16, 1887, near Hanley Falls, Minnesota, the son of Leif and Caroline (Akre) Rowberg. Mrs. Rowberg's father, Hans A. Akre, was born in Skudeneshaven on the island of Karmøy, and emigrated in 1854 to Madison, Wisconsin, where he met and married Anne Aaker who had been born in Laardal, Telemark, Norway. Andrew was baptized and confirmed in the Yellow Medicine Lutheran Church. He graduated from St. Olaf College in the class of 1910 and immediately joined the Mohn Publishing Company in Northfield. He soon became part-owner and edited the *Northfield Independent* until his retirement in 1952.

It seemed clear that Northfield, Minnesota and the written word would become important to Andrew. He had a love of history in general with a special passion for genealogy. In 1915 the Mohn Publishing Company, through its Genealogy Department, published a booklet on the importance of gathering family history information and how to organize and publish the information. Andrew believed a written record was important for current and future generations.

In 1916 Andrew married Marie Rollag. Marie's father emigrated from Tinn, Telemark, and settled near Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Marie graduated from Augustana Academy in Canton, South Dakota,

just one year behind Ole Edvart Rolvaag. She went on to attend St. Olaf College where she met her future husband.

As Norwegian Americans the Rowberg and the Rolvaag families enjoyed a long friendship. Andrew received the first copy in Northfield of the English version of *Giants in the Earth* from Harper & Brothers. The author himself had not yet seen the book. When Andrew called Rolvaag to thank him for the copy, the excited Ole and Jenny walked across town on a cold winter's eve to have a look. An article quoted Marie who remembered that evening well: "Delighted beyond words, he (Ole) danced around the room, which wasn't exactly his style."

Correspondence between Rolvaag and Rowberg indicates a close friendship. Rolvaag was supportive of Andrew's genealogical history efforts, and it was Rolvaag who requested that Rowberg turn his file of obituaries and clippings over to NAHA. Andrew was among the very first members to join the Norwegian-American Historical Association in 1925. Rolvaag's request and Rowberg's obituary collection led to the creation of the formal ROWBERG COLLECTION, which is now located at the NAHA offices on the St. Olaf Campus.

Andrew and Marie had two children, Brynhild and Leland. The younger child, Leland, was killed in the service of his country during World War II. Brynhild moved to Washington, D.C. and entered the employ of the Foreign Service in 1945. She was commissioned a Foreign Service Officer in 1956 and continued to rise through the ranks. Brynhild has returned to Northfield in her retirement and is a frequent visitor to the NAHA archives.

In the early 1950s Andrew and Marie retired from the *Northfield Independent* and moved to Virginia. There, Andrew was a founding member of the Loudoun County Virginia Historical Society and played a vital part in the preparation of the Society's constitution and by-laws. He was also an active member of the Goose Creek Meeting of Friends.

On February 9, 1969 the Norwegian-American Historical Association awarded Andrew the "Distinguished Service Award." The citation, written by Lloyd Hustvedt read, "The world has many col-

lectors, from coin and stamp collectors to those who collect pieces of string. Most of them, and rightly so, collect for personal satisfaction. Andrew A. Rowberg is a hobbyist of a different kind. He collects for the public good and the advancement of knowledge. The Rowberg Biographical File, a collection of 125,000 mounted clippings containing biographical data on Norwegian Americans, now fills a cabinet of 104 drawers and 74 volumes of scrapbooks\* containing articles too long for mounting. Through Rowberg's effort over the years, the Norwegian-American Historical Association has a biographical record the likes of which cannot be found elsewhere in this country. Its durable value is attested to through its daily use by both casual and serious researchers. Its significance will increase rather than decrease with time. From the stance of the association, Rowberg has been an unpaid staff member of the archives. It is futile to contemplate the man hours he has devoted to this collection."

Rowberg's daughter, Brynhild, attended the ceremony and sent a letter to the NAHA secretary following the ceremony: "The presentation ceremony combined the simple, unpretentious dignity and human warmth which I like to think are particularly attractive aspects of the Norwegian-American heritage."

Andrew Ansel Rowberg died in December 1969. Marie died in 1984.

\*In the spirit of Andrew Rowberg, dedicated volunteers continue to add to the ever-growing Rowberg Collection. Currently there are over 260,000 clippings in the Rowberg Collection with 300 drawers and 126 notebooks. Brynhild Rowberg is an active member of NAHA and continues to contribute to the NAHA archives.

### NATURAL DISASTER IN NORWAY'S HISTORY

Many countries have their own set of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes but one doesn't generally think of Norway as having many natural disasters. However, in May of 1893 a landslide in Verdal, Norway forever changed the landscape and the lives of many families. 750 acres of land along with farms and the 112 people living on those farms were lost that day.

*Verdalsraset 1893: The Verdal Landslide* booklet was created by the Verdal Historielag as a memorial booklet about the landslide and aftermath for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the landslide in 1993.

The booklet describes Verdal in the 1890s, the omens or warning signs apparent only with hindsight, the eyewitness descriptions, the personal expe-

riences, the impact on the river and sea, the rescue work in the midst of fear that more landslides could soon occur, miraculous rescues, as well as the sympathy and generosity from the outside world. Norwegian Americans were generous in sending resources to the area after they learned of the landslide. A list of those who died and their burial places is included along with photos and drawings to illustrate the destruction.

NAHA member Darrell Trygstad worked with the Verdal Historielag and translated the booklet into English for the many visitors who visit the area and want to learn more of the landslide. A copy has been donated to the NAHA archives. This informative and beautiful booklet is available now in the United States. All proceeds from sales of the booklet go to the Verdal Historielag to further their work. Cost is \$15.00 plus \$3.00 postage. Contact Darrell Trygstad, 17155 Jackson Trail, Lakeville, MN 55044. Phone: (952)435-1938.

### BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS at NAHA's ARCHIVES

Gary De Krey and Jeff Sauve, NAHA Archivists

We will soon be preparing a focused collection development plan for the NAHA Archives, and we welcome donations of letters and papers from Norwegian-American families. We do need to correct some misconceptions about NAHA and Norwegian books, however. The NAHA archives collects manuscripts; **but with some exceptions, we do not collect Norwegian language publications.** The exceptions are Norwegian-American imprints: that is, books and pamphlets published in the Norwegian language in the United States. We also collect *bygdebøker* and lag publications, and we are interested in published local histories and biographies of Norwegian-American families, churches, and rural communities. These materials are added to the NAHA collection, and most are shelved in Rolvaag Library at St. Olaf College.

While we recognize you might not know what to do with some of the Norwegian books in your possession, NAHA is not able to spend the time going through boxes of books that are not within our realm of expertise. If you should wish to donate books that fit into the Norwegian-American category, you could email a list of the titles to the NAHA Archivists at [nahaarchives@stolaf.edu](mailto:nahaarchives@stolaf.edu). This will save you the trouble of boxing up books and delivering them to Northfield, and we can check those titles against the NAHA collection housed in Rolvaag Library. (You can also check the library holdings yourself at <http://bridge.carleton.edu/>.) We appreciate your cooperation!

## CHECK YOUR SHELVES

Perhaps you have this two volume set, *Grand Forks County Heritage Book: A History of Rural Grand Forks County, Grand Forks, North Dakota* and would like donate it to NAHA. This can be a resource to many others researching the early settlers in North Dakota. The set was published in 1976 and 1978 by the Taylor Publishing Company. If you are no longer using this set, it would be an asset to NAHA!

## OUR THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

The NAHA Board and staff are grateful to you, our members and friends, for the generous annual support of NAHA's work. We can't do it without you! *NAHA BOARD MEMBER*

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**ADDITIONS TO THE ARCHIVES**

Received from Nina Kathryn Shimmin, *Growing Up Norwegian-American: The Early Years of Inga Appelseth Johnson and Her Life on the Minnesota Prairie, 1902-1925*. A 2005 thesis paper submitted for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in History at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. 88 pages. Inga Apalset (Norwegian spelling before becoming Appelseth) was the youngest child of Norwegian immigrants Johan and Hanna Apalset who settled in Minnesota's Yellow Medicine County at a time when immigrants were in transition between the Norwegian ways their parents brought with them and the American customs of education and commerce. In 2005 Inga was interviewed by the author and Clarkfield community members where she shared her memories of her first two decades as a Norwegian-American girl on the prairie. The older siblings helped on the farm or in the house, which meant Inga became the family ambassador to the non-Norwegian community. Hard

work on the farm and church activities were the components of everyday life. Since she was the youngest child in the family, Inga was able to attend public school and eventually attended St. Olaf College for a year.

Received from Eric and Grace Lund, *The Descendants of Ole and Anna Mundahl, with related family information on Sørhus, Berg and Elias*. Soft-cover, 276 pages. In 1870 family members left the Mundal valley in the Sognefjord for life in America. Includes family trees, copies of letters, photos, maps, copies of obituaries, and information about Norwegian naming customs and places in Norway. Family members eventually settled in Toronto, South Dakota, Kintyre, North Dakota, Dodge County, Minnesota and North Branch, Ontario.

Received from Eric and Grace Lund, *The Descendants of Ole and Thora Erickson Halgrimson, with information on the Narve and Ragna Erickson family*. Soft-cover, approximately 20 pages. Ole Halgrimson was born in Flå, Hallingdal and settled in the Brooten, Minnesota area. Thora was also born in Flå and came to America in 1867. Includes information from census records, church records and anniversary publications.

Received from Thor Larson, *Claus Hoie, Watercolors and Drawings 1943-2003*. This catalog was created for the 2004-2005 survey of Norwegian-American artist Claus Hoie's exhibit in East Hampton, New York. Hoie was born in Stavanger, Norway, emigrated to America as a 12 year old, and eventually served as a member of the elite Norwegian-American battalion, the Mountain Ski Infantry in the United States Army during WWII. Hoie's work is in collections across the United States and at the Akershus Museum in Oslo.

Received from G. Louis Heath, *Gifts From Decorah Laurah*, by Dennis Glawe, G. Louis Heath, consulting author, 701 pages. Starting in modern-day Decorah, Iowa, this is a historical novel involving pre-Civil War Abraham Lincoln, a Winnebago woman named Decorah Laurah in the early days of Winneshiek County and a plot that intended to quell the Great Sioux Uprising of 1862.

Received from the Numedal lag, a 1924 Numedalslaget og Totenlaget group photo taken at their stevne in Fergus Falls, as well as a 1914 photo from Olso for Jubileumsutstilling, anniversary celebration of Norway's constitution.

Received from the Valdres Samband stevne, a Digital Video Recording of Norwegian born Reidar Dittmann's presentation at the 2006 stevne where he spoke about his imprisonment by the Nazis during World War II and his liberation from the prison camp.

Received from Thor Rinden, diaries and family papers from his great-grandfather, Thore Y. Heggem (1880-1976). Thirty diaries were kept by Heggem from 1880-1912 (missing 1882 and 1888). Heggem was born in Strand, Norway in 1848. According to records at the Stavanger Friends Church [Quaker], outside of Marshalltown, Iowa, Heggem immigrated to the United States in 1859. He was a minister in the Friends Church as well as a farmer. The diaries are in English and detail Heggem's exotic travels to San Francisco, Hawaii, Tahiti, New York, Australia, New Zealand, Pago Pago, and American Samoa. Heggem describes in some detail the devastating San Francisco earthquake that occurred on April 18, 1906. As fires raged through the city, he kept moving ahead of the flames with his luggage in tow, finally settling in for the night in a vacant lot. Not appreciating the company with whom he found himself

the next morning, he moved on to Golden Gate Park, where he bedded down on the ground for the next several days, until he could make it out of town.

Received from Kristina Gray, "Giant in the Earth: Gentleman, Plowman, Businessman, Statesman" a paper about S.A. (Sveinung Anundsen) Olsness. Olsness left Telemark, Norway as a twenty-year-old man and settled in Sheyenne, North Dakota in 1883. His first work was building railroad tracks between Minot, North Dakota and Billings, Montana. Olsness saved his money to become a land owner in America. In 1914 Olsness made his third trip to Norway, this time leading a North Dakota delegation to deliver a statue of Abraham Lincoln to the King of Norway! Olsness' life on the prairie changed when he saw the need to advocate for North Dakota farmers through the democratic process. In 1917 he was elected the first Commissioner of Insurance for North Dakota with the Nonpartisan League.

Received from the Swedish-American Historical Society, *Scandinavians in Old and New Lands, Essays in Honor of H. Arnold Barton*. Hard-cover, 302 pages. Includes articles on Norwegian topics by NAHA members Lee Sather, J.R. Christianson, Terje Lerien, and Odd S. Lovoll.

Received from Judy Sosted, *Descendants of Tollak Olson Brudevoll*, Soft-cover, 111 pages, and a 38 page chart for descendants of Kari Arnfinnsdtr Maaredal (Moren). Tollak and Kari took over the Brudevoll farm in 1706 as *husmenn* in the community of Vik in the district of Sogn og Fjordane along the Sognefjord. Includes memories from a childhood in Erskine, Minnesota, other family recollections and births, marriages and deaths up to 2003.

Received from Jerry Austin, *Norwegians in the Northwest: Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1918*, by Eric Faa. Hardcover, 299 pages. Packed with photos of Norwegian settlers, buildings, logging, and mining around the Bella Coola river area and recollections of interaction with various Indian tribes in British Columbia. Includes an index and bibliography.

Received from Willis H. Miller, *Memories and Impressions* by Nels Manvel Lillehaugen. Soft-cover book, 324 pages. Lillehaugen grew up in Walsh County, North Dakota, and earned his B.A. Degree from Concordia College. He served four years in the armed forces during W.W.II, and later taught history and music before becoming joining the history faculty at Minot State College. In 1965 he served as the American delegate to the World Congress on Education in Ethiopia. In 1971 he completed his doctorate degree at the University of Idaho. The book includes stories from his Norwegian-American youth in North Dakota and stories about the influenza epidemic of 1918, as well as his recollections from the war years.

Received from Charles H. Russell, the paper he presented at the 2006 NAHA-Norge Conference, *Wilhelm Wærenskjold: Con-Man or Viking-Style Hero?* Wilhelm Wærenskjold married Elise Tvede in 1848. Information was available about Elise and the Norwegian colony in Texas, but little has been known about Wilhelm or how the two met and married. Russell investigated Wilhelm and his family through Dano-Norwegian court records and other Norwegian sources from the 1700 and 1800s. Wilhelm was born out of wedlock. In his youth he became involved in schemes and a juvenile petty crime spree which

would stay on his record. In Texas, Wilhelm was able to start with a clean slate and became a competent provider, landowner, and father before he was murdered in 1866.

Received from the author, Kenneth Clare, *Defiance*, Hardcover, 126 pages. In this historical novel, the Scandinavian king imposes a heavy tax designed to raise funds for what is deemed to be questionable purposes. There are protesters who are willing to publicly speak against the taxes in the 1500s. The novel follows Christian II while he is the King of Denmark and Norway and one of the chief protesters, Orm Eriksson of Norway.

Received from Deb Nelson Gourley, a translated and expanded version of Hjalmar Rued Holand's *De Norske Settlemeters Historie* and *Den Siste Folkevandring Sagastubber fra Nybyggerlivet I Amerika*. Translated by Malcom Rosholt and Helmer Blegen. *History of the Norwegian Settlements*, hard cover, 468 pages, including an index of names, illustrations, photographs. Contains information about the Norwegian communities in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota. (Holand's research consisted of interviews with hundreds of first generation settlers, so the information is not from primary sources.)

Received from the author, Sharon Fortunak, *The "R" School, Roddis School 1953-1954*. Soft-cover, 62 pages. The Roddis School was in St. Croix County, Wisconsin. Describes the one room school house from the interior, to the families who attended, the material the students tried to master, and examples of forms the school teacher issued and students had to complete. English was the language of the classroom. Copies can be obtained for \$10 each with \$2.50 for postage by contacting Jade Publications, 7120 Ivystone Avenue South, Cottage Grove, MN 55016.

Received from Sharon Fortunak, *West Akers Lutheran Church, Prairie Farm, Wisconsin, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary publication, 1905-2005*. The West Akers congregation was started by Norwegian pioneers in the northwestern portion of Dunn County, Wisconsin. Norwegian was the only language of the congregation for many years. Includes the names of officers of the earliest congregation and photos of the building, memorial building gifts, pastors over the years, and a current directory of members. Also included is an article from the Glenwood City, Wisconsin newspaper outlining the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and history of the congregation.

Received from estate of Harriet Hustvedt, *Hagen-Hustvedt Saga*, written by Harriet Hustvedt. Approximately 30 pages, including a family tree and information on where Harriet's ancestors were from in Norway and where they settled in America.

Received from Trønderlag of America, two books with recent history of the lag, *Trønderlaget of America Stevner and History, 1996-2000*, and *2001-2005*. The lag wishes to make these records available for research. An extensive effort is underway to recover missing lag records. The Trønderlag will present books to NAHA covering the Lag's history from 1908-1957, 1958-1995 when this work is completed.

Norwegian-American Historical Association  
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