

The Norwegian-American Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota

NEWS LETTER



From the NAHA Office to the Association Members

NUMBER 132

EDITOR, KIM HOLLAND

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NAHA 2007 PUBLICATION

The next publication of the Norwegian-American Historical Association will be *Selected Plays of Marcus Thrane*, translated with an introduction and comments by Terje I. Leiren. Some of our readers may have made the acquaintance of Thrane through Professor Leiren's earlier book published by the Association in 1987, *Marcus Thrane: A Norwegian Radical in America*. But others may be unfamiliar with this stormy petrel of the North Atlantic. Who was Marcus Thrane?

Both in Norway and the United States, Marcus Thrane (1817-1890) embodied the spirit of European nineteenth-century revolutionary movements. As a young man he organized labor societies that included both urban and rural members. His agitation resulted in the presentation of a petition for redress of grievances to the king signed by thousands and proposals for reform brought to the attention of the Norwegian parliament. This proved too much for the authorities who saw to the arrest of Thrane and more than a hundred other labor leaders. Tried and found guilty for opinion rather than action, Thrane was sentenced to four years in prison. When released he found the movement in disarray and he emigrated to the United States where he lived until his death.

Thrane took his causes with him to America and quickly emerged as a critic of the government, the economic order, social structures, and what he perceived to be the narrowness of Norwegian-American life. As a writer, speaker, and editor, he showed himself a keen observer and critic of both the larger American society and the smaller ethnic community to which he belonged. He wrote and spoke with a sensibility sharpened by a capacity to compare the situation in the United States with that in Europe.

Among a number of more and less successful ventures in the United States, Thrane wrote and produced a number of plays for Norwegian-speaking

audiences in America. The plays are of modest literary quality, but as entertainment and dramatically presented argument they tell us much about the author and his audiences. They continue to invite reading and may yet evoke a smile, agreement, or an argument from contemporary readers. They may do all three! I invite you to enjoy your new book when it arrives in the mail.

Todd W. Nichol, Editor

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS? SWEDES AND NORWEGIANS IN THE UNITED STATES

The Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois will be hosting a conference on the 19th and 20th of October to explore the numerous contacts and close interaction between Swedes and Norwegians in America. The two groups were often neighbors, had similar occupations, married each other, cooperated and developed comparable – but not identical – religious, cultural, and ethnic traditions. Conference presenters include leading scholars from the United States, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. A wide variety of topics, all dealing with the immigrant experience will be covered, including settlement histories, politics, preservation of cultural traditions, religious aspects, intermarriage patterns and literature.

The keynote address will be held on Friday evening the 19th, and the Saturday sessions run from 8:30 a.m. through 4:15 p.m. A conference dinner will be held on Saturday evening at 6:00 p.m. Several familiar NAHA members and authors will be presenting on Saturday the 20th. NAHA names you might remember from previous publications or presentations include Odd Lovoll, Terje Leiren, Jørn Brøndal, Ingeborg Kongslien, Ann Legried, and Jon Gjerde.

There is no charge to attend the lectures but pre-registration is requested. For more information

about this conference please contact the Conference Coordinator, Christina Johansson at (309) 794-7496, fax: (309) 794-7443, or via email at: christinajohansson@augustana.edu. The sessions will be held in Wallenberg Hall within Denkmann Memorial Hall on the Augustana College campus, 3520 7th Avenue, Rock Island, Illinois, 61201.

PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR NORWEGIANS ON THE PRAIRIE

We just received notice that the Denver Public Library in Denver, Colorado, has awarded NAHA author Odd Lovoll the prestigious Caroline Bancroft History Prize for his book *Norwegians on the Prairie: Ethnicity and the Development of the Country Town* as the best book published in 2006 on the westward movement. The Denver Public Library has a much celebrated collection of Western Americana consisting of books, documents, and artifacts.

The Library awards annually the Bancroft Prize to a single author of nonfiction books "to recognize authors who feature new perspectives about the West and who excel in research and writing." Lovoll and his *Norwegians on the Prairie* competed against 80 other books in the field of westward movement. Lovoll told us that "the most gratifying aspect of the prize for me personally is the fact that the Norwegian experience has been recognized as a major component of the westward movement." Congratulations to our former editor and long-time NAHA friend and author Odd Sverre Lovoll!!!!

NEWS from the STATE of TEXAS

On May 18th the Texas House of Representatives of the 80th Texas legislature passed H.R. no.1931 honoring Elise Amalie Tvede Wærenskjold's role in fostering Norwegian emigration to the United States and the contributions she and her fellow Norwegians made to the development of the Lone Star State!

The resolution was written by a member of the Texas State Historical Commission, Dr. Horace Flatt, and was prepared for presentation to the Western Norway Emigration Center on the occasion of their ceremony honoring Elise Warenskjold on July 7, 2007 in Sletta, Norway. The resolution will be kept permanently in the Texas State Archives.

Long-time NAHA members are familiar with NAHA's 1961 publication *The Lady with the Pen*. NAHA member, Dr. Charles H. Russell, has been active in bringing more to light about Elise Wærenskjold after the NAHA publication with his recent book, *Undaunted*, published by Texas A & M University Press. *Undaunted* contains more information about this progressive and pioneering Norwegian-American woman in Texas and reveals the events of her turbulent life and the price paid for being an abolitionist in Texas during the American Civil War.

STOLEE FAMILY PAPERS ~ WHAT A STORY!

Have you ever wondered about the connection between Norway and Madagascar? Did you know Norwegian and Norwegian-American missionaries have a long history with Madagascar? One of these missionaries, Ole Michael Jakobsen Stolee (who later went by Michael) was a teenager when he left Rogaland, Norway in 1886 and settled in America. After attending St. Olaf College he attended the seminary and felt called to be a missionary. With a committed and willing spouse, Martha Knutson Stolee, the Norwegian American sailed to France with the initial assignment of learning French so they could communicate with officials in Madagascar. 5 x 7 inch glass negative photographs capture the unique landscape and life in both Madagascar and in the United States.

Photographs from the early 1900's document the Lutheran church in Madagascar decorated for Christmas, the Stolee family members along with the natives in various everyday activities and festivities. The letters from this family to the authorities, family members and congregations describe missionary life and experiences with Madagascar's animals and traditions of the native people. The young family worked steadily for eight years before receiving their first furlough.

Michael's work was interrupted during World War I when he served in France under the National Lutheran Council. His dual roles were to serve the welfare of the American soldiers and sailors and to work with the people of the war-torn countries for reconstruction of churches in France, Poland and Russia. Eventually the family returned to the United States where Michael taught at Luther Seminary and was involved in Lutheran church life. Michael died in 1946.

For many years the correspondence and photographs remained with the family. After a conversation with the NAHA archivists it became clear the most appropriate place for this special piece of Norwegian-American history was the Norwegian-American Historical Association. In 2006 descendant and namesake, Michael Stolee donated the Stolee family papers and glass negative photographs to the Norwegian-American Historical Association.

Sadly, the donor of these family papers, the descendant of Ole Michael, Michael Stolee, died in March 2007. The family asked that memorial gifts be given to the Norwegian-American Historical Association. We are pleased the Stolee family found NAHA to be the best home for this important Norwegian-American collection.

Michael Stolee Memorial Gift

Gerald & Jane Thompson · John & Joann Youngstrom · Neilan & Judy Lund · Bonnie J. McLellan · Mr. & Mrs. Nerison · Raleigh & Ruth Broman · Scott & Barbara Godin · Margaret Lang · Gerald & Beverly McNab · Adrian & Jay Mega · Newell Nelson · Clarice Peet · Donna & Paul Roe · Margaret Stolee · Richard & Vivian Stuck · David & Joyce Andreasen · John & Norma Hanson · Mr. & Mrs. Remstad · Mr. & Mrs. William · Richard & Evelyn Thomson · Kathleen Anerson · Martha Bagley · Jennifer Eckert · Jane Ellingson Ehresmann · Karyn Hanson · Hovald & Betty Helseth · James & Audrey Homme · Gordon & Janet Johnson · Dorothy Belgium Knight · Sally Lokensgard · Marcia Meeks · Jeanette Nelson · Dr. Eugene & Margaret Skibbe · Darrol & Pauline Sponberg · Ruth Tiger · Anna Marie & Donald Klein · Arthur Schulze · Dr. Thomas Stolee · Mary Rand Taylor · Phyllis & C. Charles Welch · Judith Christensen · Shirley Lillehaugen Santoro · Marilyn Stolee

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Sarah and J. Ben Buck~In honor of Lois Rand's Birthday, Dr. Frederic A. Giere~ In memory of Lloyd hustvedt's Birthday, Reidar J Bornholdt~In memory of his mother, Torids Jullum Bornholdt, Paul and Jo Scheffel~ In memory of Hilda Kringstad.

ADDITIONS TO THE ARCHIVES

Received from Delores Thorson Lewis, correspondence from the Freida Oliasen family in Lovund, Helgeland, Norway to Delores Thorson's grandmother and aunt following World War II. Radio station WHO in Des Moines, Iowa organized volunteer efforts and matched up families in Europe who needed help following the devastation of the war. Delores' grandmother and aunt asked for a family from Norway and sent used clothing, toys and necessary articles. Delores remembers helping pack a box containing white fabric so Frieda could sew a confirmation dress for her daughter.

Received from Ruth Hanold Crane, documents from 1868 and forward from the Aslesen family of Ness, Hallingdal, Norway, the Tillotson, Erick Ellefson Sleen, and Iverson families who left the Voss area of Norway and settled in the Norwegian-American community of Jefferson Prairie, Illinois. Includes deeds, tax documents, a diploma from the Chicago Musical College, mortgage documents, house blue-prints, an autograph book from the 1880's with Norwegian and English greetings, enrollment papers for farm conservation programs. Thomas Christian Tillotson, one of the children from the large family, left Chicago after the fire of 1871 and moved west to New Mexico. A book of grave records for Minnehaha County, South Dakota, cemeteries. A history for Jasper, Minnesota where some of the earliest settlers were Norwegian, the 100th Anniversary history of Big Canoe Lutheran Church, McHenry County, Illinois Cemeteries for the townships of Alden, Chemung, Dunham, Greenwood, Hartland and Hebron, "Cooking the 'Rong' Way - Memories and Recipes from the Relatives of Ole Rong Tillerson," a family history and the California letters of Jefferson Prairie and Norwegian immigrant Knute B. Duxstad from 1852-1854, *Boone County, Illinois Then and Now* which features the Duxstad and Tillerson families as well as the Jefferson Prairie Church, *Clinton, Wisconsin, 150 Years, From Voss to Jefferson Prairie* by Ruth Hanold Crane which includes maps, photos and family stories. Family history records for the family of Torsten Kittelsson Stabeck and Torgun Clemetsdatter Gåseberg who emigrated from the Rollag and Numedal areas of Norway and settled in Illinois. Includes a copy of O.M. Norlie's 1926 booklet of Knud Knudsen's "*Beretning om en Reise fra Drammen til New York*", which was "reproduced to look exactly like the original."

Presented to NAHA, the official Sognalag minutes book 1955-2001, recording official business from *stevnes*. The lag's official minutes and much correspondence from earlier decades reside in the NAHA archives. The Sognalag's first *stevne* was held in 1908 in Albert Lea, Minnesota and attended by several thousand people.

Received from Mary Kay Keenan, excerpts pertaining to her ancestors from Rikard Berge, Vinje og Rauland Bygdeboks, volumes I-IV.

Received from Bruce Weaver, a list of emigrants, compiled in 1986 for those emigrants who left Vestre Slidre, Valdres, Norway between 1835 and 1867. The list includes names, the year of emigration and the date they left Valdres.

Received from David Hardy and Michael Bovre, all the film that was shot in Wisconsin and Norway for the PBS documentary *Destination America*. The actual portion about Norwegian immigrants that aired was less than 20 minutes. About 8 hours of film that was not used is contained in this donation.

Received from Bruce Weaver, a list, compiled in 1986, of emigrants who left Sør-Aurdal, Norway between 1816 and 1867. The list includes the names, and year of emigration.

Received from Garth Ulrich, *Snikkaren Aslak Olsen Lie, Bygdekunstnar I Valdres og Wisconsin, 1798-1886*, by Reidar Bakken. Hard-cover book, 143 pages. The content is written in Norwegian but a summary in English is provided. Descriptions of the photos are in English and Norwegian. The book examines the entire output of this folk artist from Valdres and sheds some light on conditions of folk artists and how this cabinet maker and artist adjusted to new conditions in America.

Received from Garth Ulrich, *Halvorson Heritage, the Ancestors and Descendants of Hans and Olina Halvorson*. Soft-cover, 256 pages. These Norwegians originally emigrated from Romerike, and Valdres Norway before starting a new life in Watowan County, Minnesota. Includes a pedigree chart, information from obituaries, *bygdebøker*, some documents and many photos from the early days in Minnesota, Wisconsin and later in Canada.

Received from Johannes Moe, *Historien om onkel Johan I Amerika, en Ekte Cowboy*, soft cover, 53 pages, with photos and map. Born in 1895, Johan lived his early years in Modalen in western Norway. At the age of seventeen he emigrated to America where he homesteaded in Garfield County, Montana. Johan was drafted in 1917 to fight for his new country in France and Belgium against the German armies. Upon returning to Montana Johan changed his name to John and raised horses, cattle and sheep. He built his first house in 1953. For over 33 years he lived alone in a wagon that could move on the prairie with his herds. He owned 7,000 acres when he retired and enjoyed hunting game. He made three visits to Norway before he died in 1967.

Received from Doug Crane, *Fifty Years of Academic Achievement and International Good Will, International Summer School University of Oslo, Norway, 50th Session 1996*. Hard-cover, 143 pages. Reviews the growth and development of the International Summer School's first 50 years. Includes chapters written by NAHA members Reidar Dittmann and Terje Leiren, as well as photos of key

people such as Jo Kleber and Lloyd Hustvedt. Also includes the evolution of classes offered, now including Norwegian Petroleum Law and Trans-boundary Pollution in addition to the music, history, art and culture of Norway.

Received from Allan Solmonson, *A Farm Widow Moves to Town: The Diaries of Gilma Solmonson, So We had Coffee and Visited*. Spiral-bound, 471 pages. The diaries span from 1964-1998 and cover the everyday topics a farm widow has to deal with including hail insurance, taxes on the farm, preparations for leading and hosting ladies aide, the death of a sibling, having a paycheck from the job in town, praying for the daughter and son-in-law who were Lutheran missionaries in Japan, dealing with the weather, cashing in gold-bond stamps and having grandchildren visit.

Received from LaDonna Eckstrom Levik, a family history of Lars and Sarah (Musland) Johnson, prepared for a 1986 family reunion. Lars and Sarah left Kvinnherad, Norway in 1872 and settled in Clinton County, Iowa. After Lars died the family moved to Story City, Iowa. Includes a history of Kvindherred Lutheran Church in Olive Township. Services were available in Norwegian until 1930. (In 1946 the church name was changed to Our Savior's) Also includes photos, memories and obituaries. Sarah lived to be 97 years old. The family cookbook includes memories, Norwegian customs and Norwegian recipes from the descendants of Lars and Sarah Johnson.

Received from Pam Nerhus, *The Descendants of Ole Larson Mehuse 1862-1965-1979*. The Grandchildren formed a committee to compile this family history. Notebook, 349 pages. Includes the maps, photos from Norway and the United States, family charts and current updates on the descendants as of 1979. The family farm was located in Gjetningsdalen, Mauranger from approximately 1590-1900. When Ole died in Norway in 1882 his wife, Anne Oldsdatter Braathun Mehuse emigrated to America at the age of 74 and brought with her a daughter and grandson to reconnect with her four sons and daughter who had already emigrated to America. Anna and her son called Story City, Iowa home.

Received from Alden J. Hvidston, *Asmund "Andy" Hvidston*, Spiral-bound, 98 pages. Asmund Hvidston was born in Kristiania in 1898 and in 1913 decided to emigrate to Warroad, Minnesota to live with an aunt and uncle. Includes baptismal and confirmation certificates, photos, school records, back-

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ground about general immigration from Norway to the United States, the steamship and railway ticket from the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, maps, photos, letters, obituaries, newspaper articles. Asmund served in the United States Army for World War I and has copies of ration books from World War II. Where there are uncertainties those are stated along with differing versions if there were only rumors to explain actions.

Received from Judy Sosted, *Descendents of Maren Olsdatter Maredal and Ola Andersson Maaren, Vik-i-sognefjord, Norway and Deuel County, S.D.* Spiral bound, 111 pages. Describes economic conditions in the Sogn district of Norway in the 1700's and 1800's to help understand the mass migration from that area to America. Includes some photos, family charts, information about where the succeeding generations moved, what their employment was, and obituaries and remembrances of people and daily life.

Received from Judy Sosted, *Descendants of Kari Arnfinnsdtr Maaredal (Moren)*, Spiral-bound, 38 pages. Family charts listing dates of births, marriages and deaths in Norway and United States.

Received from Ruth Hanold Crane, *The Aselesen Family Heritage*, by Robert Aslesen, Spiral-bound, 240 pages. The Grimsgaard farm in Nes, Hallingdal, Norway was the starting point for emigration to the United States in 1857, homesteading in Houston County, Minnesota. Includes maps, photos, copies of newspaper articles, genealogy charts, biographies of the early pioneers in Minnesota and more recent photos of the succeeding generations.

Received from Don Hoganson, *The Pioneer Social Club of Chicago, Founded in 1878*. Spiral-bound, 75 pages. A history of the men's Norwegian-American social club, including brief biographies of the earliest members as well as photos. (Birger Osland, author of *A Long Pull from Stavanger* and long-time NAHA supporter was a member of the Pioneer Social Club.) The club's members have over the years been involved in many of the Norwegian and civic organizations in the Chicago area while membership has been limited to twelve gentlemen. The small group even entertained then Crown Prince Harald when he visited Chicago in 1965.