When I stepped into the role of director for NAHA two years ago, I knew it was just one in a series of many transitions for the Association. We were already talking about creating a new strategic plan, developing new initiatives for the archives and publications programs, and sharing a new facility with St. Olaf College Special Collections. And while my colleagues’ retirements hadn’t been announced, I knew it could only be a matter of time before our editor, Todd Nichol, and archivist, Gary De Krey, moved on. Little did I know that they would choose the same day, Aug. 31, to retire!

What a pleasure it has been to work with these two gentlemen. I can’t thank them enough for the goodwill, wisdom, and collegiality they have shared with me. Together, Todd and Gary leave with a combined service to NAHA of more than 25 years — these are big shoes to fill! Read more about their contributions on pages 6 and 7.

With new opportunities and roles emerging in St. Olaf Special Collections, our associate archivist, Jeff Sauve, will now focus his energy solely on his work for the college, rather than devoting a portion of his time to NAHA. I’m grateful he will continue to be a library colleague and a resource right across the hall as we welcome our new interim archivist this fall.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank Todd, Gary, and Jeff for their service to the Association and wish them the very best. Keep your eye on news from NAHA as we navigate these staffing transitions. We plan to introduce our new interim archivist in the next issue of Currents and announce a new editor in 2018.

Amy Boxrud, Director

“ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, I WANT TO THANK TODD, GARY, AND JEFF FOR THEIR SERVICE TO THE ASSOCIATION AND WISH THEM THE VERY BEST.”
FALL EVENT TO FOCUS ON FOODWAYS

Save the date for our upcoming fall member event, as we celebrate Norwegian foodways, past and present. On Nov. 2 NAHA is teaming up with the Mill City Museum for an evening of sampling, sipping, and socializing. Debbie Miller, co-author of “Potluck Paradise,” will convene a panel of Norwegian food aficionados, including Darlene Fossum-Martin, educational specialist at Vesterheim Museum. Come for the discussion, stay for the lefse, rømmegrøt, aquavit, and more!

Thursday, Nov. 2, 6–8 p.m.
Mill City Museum
704 S 2nd St, Minneapolis

For details and to register, visit naha.stolaf.edu.

ARCHIVES PRESERVATION PROJECT UNDERWAY

The archivists at NAHA embarked on a major preservation project this summer. Older, acidic folders in the Association’s more than 1,700 collections are being replaced with acid-free, archival-quality files. “The refoldering project is critical to the future of the NAHA archives,” NAHA Archivist Gary De Krey says. “It will put an end to the degradation of some materials that has occurred because old folders have reacted with fragile paper and photographs.”

Archival standards have dramatically changed since many of these files were created in the 1930s and ’40s. New methods and practices have been developed, and new materials are available now that weren’t when the Archives were founded in 1925. “We’re standardizing it all now with the current methods and materials,” says NAHA Associate Archivist Jeff Sauve. “By doing this now, these file folders will be good for another 150 years.”

While the archivists didn’t expect the project to be completed this summer, considerable progress was made. Stella Quale ’19, a St. Olaf student employee responsible for much of the hands-on processing of this project, reviewed more than 100 collections per week.

The incentive for starting this project is to prepare NAHA materials for the upcoming move to a climate-controlled vault. St. Olaf College has included the library in its current Framework Plan for growth and enhancements on campus. The plan includes a new, combined facility for the Association, along with the college archives and special collections.

BY CASSIDY NEUNER ’18

Stella Quale ’19
The Waldemar Ager Association recently led an effort to make nearly 2,400 issues of the Norwegian-language weekly newspaper, Reform, available online. The Association’s Ager Museum in Eau Claire, Wisc., houses the physical copies of Reform, which were published and edited by Waldemar Ager from 1896 to 1941. For many years, the Ager Association hoped to digitize the newspaper and make it accessible online. Recent financial gifts to the organization have made it possible to partner with the Wisconsin Historical Society to do so.

“Reform was one of the most important Norwegian-American newspapers,” says Tim Hirsch, a founder of the Ager Association. “Around 1900, at the peak of its circulation, more people in [Wisconsin’s] Chippewa Valley and beyond were reading their news from Reform than from both area English-language newspapers combined.”

A repository for letters, travel accounts, poetry, and fiction, in addition to news articles, the digitized newspaper is an invaluable resource for those researching Norwegian-American immigrant communities, according to Hirsch. Ager, who immigrated to America in 1885, was a champion of Norwegian-American cultural growth and the temperance movement. He is considered one of the most widely known Norwegian Americans of his era.

“Reform is a record of Waldemar Ager’s responses to historical events. To have this information available online, anywhere in the world, is an important resource for genealogists, historians, and others curious readers,” Hirsch says.

The Ager Association partnered with the ResCarta Foundation (rescarta.org) to format the digitized files and add tools to make them more usable. The files are browsable by issue and searchable by keyword. It is also possible to convert selections of original Fraktur script into more readable text.

When searching for a digital host, the Ager Association discovered that the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire’s McIntyre Library hosts digital collections similar to Reform. Hirsch says the library was immediately on board when the association proposed that it host the newspaper.

To read Reform online and learn more about the Waldemar Ager Association and the Ager Museum, visit agerhouse.org.

To LEARN MORE about Waldemar Ager, read “Immigrant Idealist: A Literary Biography of Waldemar Ager, Norwegian American” by Einar Haugen (NAHA, 1989).
The 13th triennial seminar of Det norsk-amerikanske historielag i Norge (NAHA-Norge) was held June 21–23 in Stavanger, Norway, with the theme Migration, Minorities, and Freedom of Religion. Following the conference, the organization held its triennial member meeting on June 24.

The opening speaker for the conference was Norwegian novelist Edvard Hoem, who is currently working on the third volume of a trilogy based on his family’s immigration to North America. Other keynote speakers were Robynne R. Healey, professor of history at Trinity Western University in British Columbia, and Solveig Zempel, St. Olaf College professor emerita of Norwegian. For a full list of presenters, visit nahanorge.wordpress.com.

The conference included a day trip to nearby Tysvær, where participants visited the Stakland Quaker meeting house, brought to the area and rebuilt by the Quakers in 1867. Attendees also climbed aboard a replica of Restauration, the sloop that sailed in 1825 with the first group of Norwegian immigrants to North America. The day ended at the Tysvaer Community Center with a performance of “The Uprooting,” an immigration-themed musical by a performing group based in Duluth, Minn.

"It was nice to coordinate the timing of NAHA’s tour to Northern Norway and our seminar so that several tour participants could attend," says NAHA-Norge President Nils Olav Østrem. "Overall, I think the conference was a good starting point for further cooperation between our organizations, especially as we look to bicentennial commemorations in 2025 of Norwegian emigration to America."

NAHA-Norge was formed in 1981 as a chapter of the Norwegian-American Historical Association. In 2014, the two organizations signed a memorandum of agreement, creating two independent organizations and renaming the organization Det norsk-amerikanske historielaget i Norge (NAHA-Norge).

**CALL FOR COLLABORATION**
Conversations among scholars at the NAHA-Norge seminar revealed the need for enhanced trans-Atlantic communication, especially regarding collaborative research. To share updates on potential scholarly work or works in progress in this newsletter, email a brief description of your project (100 words or less) to naha@stolaf.edu.
FOND FAREWELLS

NAHA MARKS THE RETIREMENTS OF TWO KEY STAFF MEMBERS WHOSE DISTINGUISHED CAREERS HAVE HELPED SHAPE THE ASSOCIATION

BY CASSIDY NEUNER ’18

Gary De Krey retired at the end of August after serving as NAHA archivist for more than 10 years, as well as St. Olaf professor of History and director of the Shaw-Olson Center for College History.

“I grew up in North Dakota surrounded by Norwegian Americans. Although I have no Norwegian ancestry, I do now feel at least half Norwegian-American!” De Krey says.

Although De Krey had many duties as NAHA archivist, he enjoyed working with the image collections the most.

“I’m an amateur photographer, so of course I enjoyed working with the NAHA photographs,” he says. “I had a great time creating the online collection of early Minnesota Norwegian-American images for the Minnesota Sesquicentennial, and the addition of early images from Wisconsin was also fun.”

After graduating from St. Olaf in 1971, he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in history from Princeton University. He spent a few years

“GARY DE KREY’S BROAD GRASP OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH and writing enabled to him serve NAHA extremely well. Of his many strengths, I especially valued his rational approach to problem-solving – identifying problems, becoming informed, gathering evidence, discussing options, sharing labor, and reasoning through solutions.”

— Betty A. Bergland, NAHA Archives Committee Chair
Odd Nichol, King Olav V Chair in Scandinavian-American Studies, also retired at the end of the summer, after serving as NAHA editor and St. Olaf professor of history since 2001.

“My greatest satisfaction as editor was, quite simply, editing,” Nichol says of his time at NAHA. “It was a privilege to assist in the appearance of worthwhile scholarship.”

During his tenure at NAHA, Nichol edited multiple publications, including "Crossings: Norwegian-American Lutheranism as a Transatlantic Tradition"; "Interpreting the Promise of America: Essays in Honor of Odd Sverre Lovoll"; and the four-volume collection "From America to Norway: Norwegian-American Immigrant Letters 1838–1914."

Nichol graduated from St. Olaf in 1974, and continued his studies at Luther Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif. He worked first as a parish pastor and then as a professor of church history at Luther Seminary before joining the history department at St. Olaf. Around the time of WWI, Nichol’s grandparents were Scandinavian immigrants to the United States, and it’s their story that first sparked Nichol’s interest in Scandinavian studies.

In addition to teaching, Nichol was involved in campus life beyond the classroom. He founded the Runestones, a student-led accordion group, and he helped plan campus events such as the Nordic Bash, a celebration of the college’s Norwegian roots. In 2006 Nichol was awarded the rank of Officer of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit for the education, research, and other services performed for the good of Norwegian-American relations.

As for his retirement, Nichol says it will be a “work in progress.”

“Perhaps Todd Nichol’s most noteworthy accomplishment has been the publication of the four-volume collection “From America to Norway,” which captures letters from immigrants reflecting on the American experience to a homeland audience in Norway. It is a fitting legacy for one who understands the importance of reading the Norwegian immigrant in his or her own voice.”

— Daron W. Olson
NAHA Publications Committee Chair
When O. E. Rølvaag founded the Norwegian-American Historical Association in 1925, he likely never dreamed that its members would return to his birthplace on the island of Donna more than 90 years later. He might have been even more surprised, and more than a little pleased, to learn that three of his grandchildren, along with their spouses, would be among the 24 NAHA members who made the journey together.

The day trip to Rølvåg on the island of Donna was just one of the highlights of the NAHA Northern Migration tour. Convening in Trondheim on June 10, the group spent the next 10 days making their way north along the stunning Helgeland coast. Traveling mainly by bus, the group rode ferries, traversed islands, and enjoyed majestic mountain views at nearly every turn.

In addition to the lesser-known history of emigration from northern Norway to North America, the tour explored Viking migrations to what is now northern Russia, Iceland, and beyond. Participants also learned about migration to the region, including the historic movement of farmers from eastern Norway and the contemporary migration of immigrants and refugees from other parts of the world. Seasonal patterns, such as the annual Lofoten fishery and the migration of Sami reindeer herders, were also explored.

“I learned so much, and I’m continuing my Northern Migrations education on my own,” a participant wrote following the tour.

Another participant shared, “I was amazed at how far we traveled in Norway … I loved crossing the Arctic Circle and the Lofoten Islands. Those were places that I would never have gone on my own.”

Above: The group visits an ancient burial mound in the Lofoten Islands.
The group spent two nights in Svolvær in the stunning Lofoten Islands. A day tour included Lofoten Museum, Lofotr Viking Museum, and the charming fishing village of Henningsvær.

Participants traveled to Lofoten by Hurtigruten Coastal Express after exploring the city of Bodø.

A day trip to the island of Dønna included a tour of Dønnes Church, lunch at Dønnes Farm, and a stop at Rolvåg, birthplace of novelist and NAHA founder O. E. Rølvaag.

The tour began in Trondheim. City highlights included Nidaros Cathedral and Sverresborg Trøndelag Folk Museum.

On Hamarøy, the Knut Hamsun Center was the tour’s final attraction before returning to Bodø.

Sandnessjøen was home base for visiting the Petter Dass Museum and Alstahaug Church.

Snåsa is the birthplace of immigrants Ole Rynning, O. M. Oleson, and Bernt Julius Muus. The visit included stops at the South Sami Museum and Snåsa Church.

A brief stop in Hell offered an opportunity to learn about immigrant bridge engineer Martin Grytbak.
The most significant additions to the archives over the past few months are listed here.

To discuss a donation of archival material, contact us at naha-archivists@stolaf.edu. Collection guidelines are available online at naha.stolaf.edu/archives/guidelines.pdf. Although we aren't able to acknowledge all donations here, we do appreciate every donation, large and small. Families may be sure that donations made to the NAHA archives will remain open for future family consultations.

DONATED APRIL 1–JUNE 30, 2017

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

• Cappelen, Frederick William (1857–1921) research files, compiled by Jennifer A. Schultz. Born in Drammen, Norway, Cappelen immigrated to the United States in 1880. In 1893 he was appointed city engineer for Minneapolis, a position he held for 15 years. He was responsible for the design of many public works buildings in Minneapolis, including the F.W. Cappelen Memorial Bridge (Franklin Avenue Bridge) named in his honor. Added to P0683 Knut Gjer set Papers/Engineers. Donated by Jennifer A. Schultz (with encouragement by Dennis Gimmestad, NAHA Board President and Lifetime Member).

• Flaten, Nils (1867–1947) family letters, photographs, and papers (additions to collection). Born in Valdres, Norway, Flaten taught Romance languages at St. Olaf College, 1900–46. Includes a typescript memoir that addresses his student days and subsequent years as a teacher. Reminiscences include childhood Christmas practices and customs (meals, brewing beer, animal tending, singing, presents, church service, visiting neighbors, games, and julebukking). Added to P1712 Nils Flaten Papers. Donated by Mary Flaten.

• Gjertsen/Giertsen/Gjertzen, Anna N. E. (1842–1932) collection. Born in Solstad, Nordland, Norway, Gjertsen emigrated from Bergen in 1886 and settled in Minneapolis, where she served as a teacher. The collection contains correspondence from her mother, Christine Marie Olson Gjertzen. Of particular note is a small archive of the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg. Items include a letter penned by Grieg to Gjertsen on Nov. 24, 1881; a program for a concert conducted by Grieg in Bergen on April 3, 1882; and a carte de visite photograph of Grieg (backside, autographed by him to Gjertsen, April 1882). Added to P0539, Family Histories. Donated by George C. Olson, NAHA Associate Member.


FAMILY HISTORIES, MEMOIRS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

• Canoe Ridge Lutheran Church, Decorah, Iowa, 100th Anniversary Booklet (1906–2006). Added to P0537 Congregations Papers. Donated by Beth Rotto.


• Nilson, Lester Thomas. Austevoll Saga: Jacobson-Baardsen
Reflections. Their Homeland, Their Ancestors, and Their Descendants (2007). Added to P0539, Family Histories. Donated by John T. Nilson, NAHA Board Member and Lifetime Member.


- Twedt, Arlen. The Central Iowa Norwegians: Histories, Memoirs, and Studies of their Settlements from 1855 to 1905, Vol. 1 (2017). Norwegian immigrants founded a settlement southwest of Cambridge, Iowa, in June 1855 and a second colony east of Story City in June 1856. Twenty-five years later, 6,500 Norwegians were living in central Iowa. Added to P1537 Central Iowa Norwegian Project. Donated by Arlen Twedt, NAHA Sustaining Member.


- Twedt, Arlen. Meskwaki along the Upper South Skunk River: Pioneer References of Their Presence in Hamilton, Story and Polk Counties (2012). Two Norwegian settlements were founded in 1855 and 1856 close to the Skunk River. Added to P1537 Central Iowa Norwegian Project. Donated by Arlen Twedt, NAHA Sustaining Member.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The tornado that struck New Richmond, Wisc., on June 12, 1899, is remembered as one of the state’s most tragic weather events. Striking the town late in the afternoon, shortly after a circus ended, the storm resulted in 117 deaths and 150 injuries. Its path through the center of town left 300 buildings destroyed or damaged. According to a report from the National Weather Service, the visibility of the funnel as it approached may have prevented an even higher death toll.