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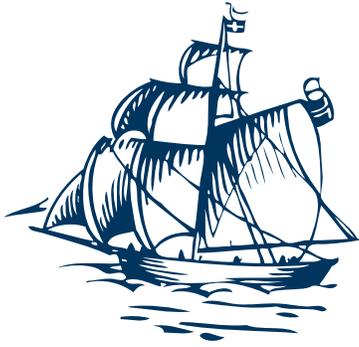
New  
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# Currents

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION | SPRING/SUMMER 2017 VOLUME 165





# REACHING OUT

**Y**our issue of *Currents* is arriving with some additional content this quarter. Inside, you will find a 2016 NAHA Annual Report. We wanted to share this information with our members because we are proud of the work we accomplished together in 2016, and we want to thank you for the many ways you help make NAHA the organization it is today. I welcome your feedback or questions on our 2016 programming or any other aspect of the report.

If I had to sum up the efforts and activities of NAHA this quarter in one word, it would be *outreach*. The Association intends to reach out in many ways this spring and summer — to individuals and to other organizations. For example, the months of May and June are filled with opportunities to connect with scholars and researchers. NAHA members gathered to help kick off the annual international meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study (SASS), held this year in Minneapolis. That same day, we hosted a pre-conference excursion so SASS members could learn more about our archives, along with the other special collections at St. Olaf College.



In June, we will also have the opportunity to connect with historians attending a seminar organized by Det norske amerikanske historielaget (also known as NAHA-Norge). With at least a dozen NAHA members attending this year's triennial seminar, it's a wonderful opportunity to maintain close ties to our sister organization, and for scholars of Norwegian-American history on both sides of the Atlantic to connect.

Some of the best opportunities for outreach happen when our members get involved. Do you know someone who would make a great NAHA member? Tell them about the Association or invite them to a member event. Do you have a neighbor or friend who has letters, photographs, or records in need of a permanent home? Our staff is ready to help. Are you a historian who is already familiar with NAHA? Tell your colleagues or students about the treasure trove that awaits researchers in the Archives.

Thank you for reaching out on behalf of NAHA and for helping us in our mission to collect, preserve, and interpret the Norwegian-American experience with accuracy, integrity, and liveliness.

Amy Boxrud, Director

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## on the cover

Unidentified family.  
From the NAHA  
Image Collection.



IMAGE COURTESY OF ROGER JOHANSEN, NORDNORGE.COM

## NORTHERN MIGRATIONS TOUR

June 9-20 Northern Migrations Tour

The NAHA Northern Migrations Tour, exploring migration to, from, and within Northern Norway, departs June 9. The group is comprised of 24 members from across the country, many of whom have recently joined the Association. “We’re so pleased to have several new friends join us for this journey,” says NAHA President Dennis Gimmestad.

Led by St. Olaf College Professor Emerita Solveig Zempel, the tour begins in Norway’s medieval capital city of Trondheim and continues northward to Bodø. Participants will visit Dønna, the birthplace of novelist Ole Rølvaag; explore Viking and fishing migrations in the Lofoten islands; learn about the seasonal movements of Sami reindeer herders; and much more.

After completing the 11-day tour, a subset of the group will travel to Stavanger, where they will attend the NAHA-Norge triennial seminar with other NAHA members.

## NAHA-NORGE HOSTS TRIENNIAL SEMINAR

NAHA sister organization, Det norsk amerikanske historielaget i Norge (NAHA-Norge) will hold its 13th triennial seminar in Stavanger, Norway, June 21–24.

Seminar speakers, several of whom are NAHA members from the United States, will present a wide range of topics within Norwegian-American studies. With the theme of “migration, minorities, and freedom of religion,” the seminar marks the upcoming bicentennial of the founding of the Quaker community in 1818. Speakers are encouraged to focus on group migration related to children, youth, women, and Quakers.

Seminar participants will visit the nearby community of Tysvær, where they will tour a replica of the sloop Restauration, which left the area with the first group of Norwegian immigrants in 1824. Participants will also visit the Stakland Quaker meeting house. A special performance of the play “The Uprooting” by members of Sons of Norway lodge Nortun Lodge 1-016 of Duluth, Minn., is planned.

For more information, visit [nahanorge.wordpress.com](http://nahanorge.wordpress.com).

## SUMMER READS

Summer is coming, bringing reading time on long weekends, road trips, and at the cabin. Here are three suggestions to pack along on your upcoming getaways.

### ***They Sang for Norway: Olaf Oleson's Immigrant Choir***

Ane-Charlotte Five Aarset  
MNHS Press (2017) • 288 pages  
\$24.95

Ane-Charlotte Five Aarset tells the story of Norwegian immigrant Olaf Oleson, who helped establish the Norwegian-American Historical Association in addition to the Norwegian Singers Association of America. By entertaining audiences across North America, the singers raised funds to support Norway's cause of liberation from Sweden.



[mnhs.org/mnhspress/books/they-sang-norway](http://mnhs.org/mnhspress/books/they-sang-norway)



### ***Family Photo Detective: Learn How to Find Genealogy Clues in Old Photos and Solve Family Photo Mysteries***

Maureen A. Taylor  
Family Tree Books (2013) • 176 pages  
\$26.99

Photo identification expert Maureen Taylor explains how to date family photos, identify relatives, interview family members, and more. The book contains helpful tips and tools for anyone getting started with genealogical research.

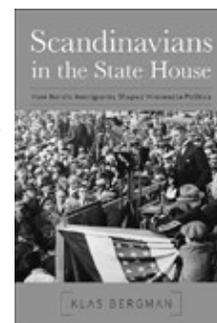


[shopfamilytree.com/family-photo-detective](http://shopfamilytree.com/family-photo-detective)

### ***Scandinavians in the State House: How Nordic Immigrants Shaped Minnesota Politics***

Klas Bergman  
MNHS Press (2017) • 304 pages  
\$19.95

Scandinavian immigrants have been highly involved in U.S. politics at both the local and federal levels. In his new book, NAHA member Klas Bergman profiles Scandinavian immigrants who were active in politics, examining their diverse philosophies and varied backgrounds.



[mnhs.org/mnhspress/books/scandinavians-state-house](http://mnhs.org/mnhspress/books/scandinavians-state-house)

## SASS MEMBERS VISIT SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study (SASS) held its annual seminar in Minneapolis May 11–14. On Thurs., May 11, the organization offered a pre-seminar excursion to tour the NAHA Archives, along with the other special collections held in St. Olaf College's Rølvaag Memorial Library. "We thought this was an excellent opportunity to introduce international scholars to the wonderful resources found at St. Olaf. We hope some will be inspired to return to conduct research," says SASS President Margaret Hayford O'Leary. Nearly 30 scholars spent the afternoon touring the facility before returning to Minneapolis to attend the seminar's opening lecture and reception that evening. NAHA members were also invited to attend the seminar's kickoff events in Minneapolis. To learn more about SASS, visit [scandinavianstudy.org](http://scandinavianstudy.org).

# FACT-CHECK YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

BY DALE HOVLAND

New digital tools sometimes bring new information to a family story. Even histories of well-documented families might contain inaccuracies that need clearing up. The family of Norwegian-American author Waldemar Ager is no exception.

In 1989, NAHA published "Immigrant Idealist: A Literary Biography of Waldemar Ager, Norwegian American" by Einar Haugen. The book includes "Waldemar Ager: A Chronology" (pp. 5–6).

Here are selected entries from the chronology to be examined further:

- 1883: Father Martinius emigrates to America to settle in Chicago as a custom tailor.
- 1885: Mother Mathea and three children emigrate to Chicago; Waldemar begins as apprentice printer at *Norden*, a Norwegian-American weekly newspaper.

Today the Internet provides access to basic historical records such as church books (births, marriages, deaths, transfers in and out of a parish), Norwegian censuses, and emigration records.

A closer look at the Ager chronology reveals some inaccuracies that can now be corrected with better access to historical records.

| INFORMATION IN QUESTION   | FACT  | SOURCE   |
|---|---|--|
| Waldemar Ager's first name  | His given name was Theodor Waldemar.  | Baptism record   |
| Martinius Ager, Waldemar's father, emigrated in 1883.   | He emigrated in 1880.   | Camilla's memoir, supported by official emigration records                                     |
| Waldemar emigrated to Chicago in 1885 with his mother and two siblings.   | Johan emigrated in 1881, followed by Mathea and Ferdinand in 1884. The only Agers to emigrate in 1885 were Waldemar and his sister Camilla. | Camilla's memoir, supported by official emigration records                                     |
| Waldemar's brother Johan took the name John Cornfield, which may be a translation of the Norwegian word <i>ager</i> . | While Cornfield may have been an early variation on the name, Johan also used the name Comfield.  | A grave record for Johan's son Einar says the parents are John M. and Alida (Hansen) Comfield. |

Naturally, some of the inaccuracies above have been cited in other books, publications, and online articles. Even the eulogy at Waldemar's funeral referenced his coming to Chicago with his mother at the age of 16.

When researching or fact-checking family histories, the names of people and

places can be especially problematic. Spellings of personal names were fluid: For example, Ager's mother can be found as both Meattha and Mathea. For this reason, using wildcard characters in searchable databases can be helpful (\*M\*th\*). Sometimes names were changed entirely in America, such as in the case of Johan

Ager, who became John Comfield as referenced above. Place names in Norway were also commonly changed. Examples: Ager was born in Glemminge, which was changed to Glemming in 1918, and 1875 Norwegian census data reports the Ager family living in Græsvig, now Gressvik.

**Here are some useful websites to begin fact-checking your own family history:**

**FamilySearch:** [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org)

**Norwegian Digital Archives:** [arkivverket.no/eng/Digitalarkivet](http://arkivverket.no/eng/Digitalarkivet)

**FindAGrave:** [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com)

**Norwegian-American Historical Association:** [naha.stolaf.edu/archivesdata/leif](http://naha.stolaf.edu/archivesdata/leif)

# MAKE HISTORY

## TIPS ON PLANNING, WRITING, AND EDITING YOUR FAMILY STORY

BY AMY  
BOXRUD

**M**any people first encounter the Norwegian-American Historical Association while exploring their own family histories. They might make an appointment to research in the archives or schedule time with a NAHA volunteer who can help interpret genealogical materials available online and in Rølvaag Memorial Library. Our staff enjoys seeing the results of this research when family history books are donated to the NAHA Family History and Genealogy Collection.

While family historians were once relegated to the world of

typewriters and photocopies to publish their stories, today a number of options exist for self-publishing, from print-on-demand to e-books. However, some things haven't changed. Every great book still begins with a great manuscript, so regardless of the publishing platform you choose, read on for suggestions for planning, writing, and editing your story.

### SCOPE

Before you write your first word, consider the scope of your project. It's impossible to document everything, so some upfront

planning will save research and writing time in the long run. "This is a pretty important step, so take some time and think about it. It's not a bad idea to start small and experiment with a more manageable project before creating a 600-page, all-encompassing family history," writes genealogist Bobbi Schirado in *Michigana*, the journal of the Western Michigan Genealogical Society.

A common approach to family history is writing a biography of an ancestor, or you might consider writing your own autobiography or personal memoirs. Another strategy is to record the history of a farm, home, or family business. Some writers may focus on particular events, such as a migration journey, war experiences, or educational memories. Others may choose to document a trip to a family farm in Norway. Sometimes source materials themselves become the story when a project is structured around a diary, letters, or photographs.

### WRITING

Decide the overall tone you want to achieve, whether it be a warm, personal narrative from the first-person perspective or a more objective account in the third person. During the research and writing phases, be sure to keep track of your sources. Depending on your project



Holiday photo from the L.A. Rossing Collection



and audience, you can choose between footnotes, endnotes, or a source list at the end of your project. If you know what images you plan to use, note them in the manuscript as well.

“Make sure you have permission to use the pictures in a published work. If they’re from your family collection, you probably do, unless a professional photographer took the photo after 1922. Otherwise, you’ll need to obtain permission from the copyright holder or the

owner of the image, or figure out whether it’s in the public domain,” writes genealogist and photo expert Maureen Taylor in *Family Tree Magazine*.

As you write, keep track of any decisions you make regarding punctuation, capitalization, spelling (Norwegian person and place names often change over time), and formatting of notes and sources. This list, called a style sheet, will come in handy during the editing and production of the book.

## EDITING AND COPYEDITING

When you are ready for input, find someone to serve as your editor. This might be a trusted friend or family member, a freelancer, or a turnkey publisher who can manage the rest of the project. To find editorial rates and hire an editor in your area, visit the Freelance Editorial Association online ([the-efa.org](http://the-efa.org)).

*continued on page 8*

continued from page 7

The editor's job is to provide a fresh perspective, keeping the reader in mind. He or she can point out if content is redundant, extraneous, or unclear. An editor can also note where more information is needed and if photos or other images are appropriate.

Rather than completing the whole manuscript before engaging an editor, some writers prefer a more iterative process. "Some writers work on one chapter and then have it read immediately rather than waiting until the entire book is

"IT'S NOT A BAD IDEA TO START SMALL and experiment with a more manageable project before creating a 600-page, all-encompassing family history."

complete. This can be very valuable, as it may suggest new directions for later parts of the book, or it may indicate an entirely separate book might be in order," writes Scirado.

At this phase, you and your editor might discuss creating supplementary content, such as a genealogy, chronology, or other background materials. Providing this extra content may enable you to omit details from your main text, creating a smoother narrative flow.

After you've considered your editor's comments and revised your manuscript, you will also want someone to copyedit your manuscript, reading it closely for grammar and usage, spelling, and punctuation. Your copy editor will consult the project stylesheet and likely add more items to it. It might be tempting to forego this step, but don't. "Even the most seasoned authors utilize copy editors to proofread their work and double-check grammar and spelling. Making sure your text is in its final

form also will save you money: You pay for every change you make after submitting your book to the printer," writes Taylor.

## PRODUCTION OPTIONS

When your manuscript is complete, several options exist for the design, production, and printing of your book. You can do it yourself, find a turnkey solution, or use some combination of services. When considering this, Taylor stresses keeping your end product and purpose in mind. Are you creating a reference, telling a story, or creating a glossy, image-rich keepsake? Will you sell it or give it away? Your audience, budget, skills, and desktop publishing savvy will all influence your decision. An overview of desktop publishing options is laid out in Taylor's article, available online at [familytreemagazine.com/Article/publishing-your-family-history](http://familytreemagazine.com/Article/publishing-your-family-history). □

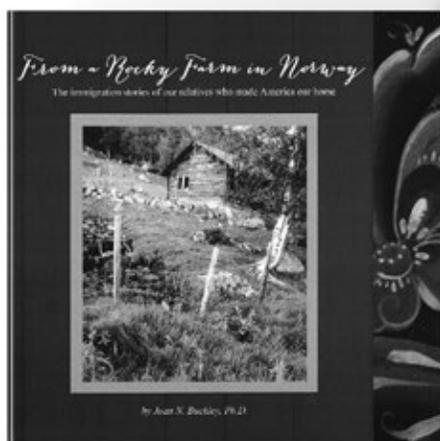
### Sources:

- "How to Self-Publish Your Family History Book" by Maureen A. Taylor. *Family History Magazine* (Sept. 2015).
- "Publish Your Own Family History Book" by Bobbi Schirado. *Michigan* (Volume 60: Issue 1, No. 241).



## FROM THE NAHA COLLECTION

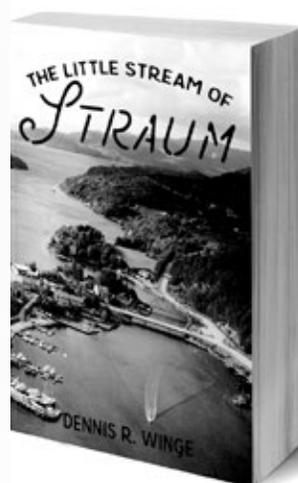
These recent donations, selected by Associate Archivist Jeff Sauve, highlight the quality, depth, and variety of works being produced by family historians.



***From a Farm in Norway:  
The Immigrant Stories of  
our Relatives Who Made  
America our Home***

Joan N. Buckley, Ph.D.  
48 HR Books (2017)  
[48hrbooks.com](http://48hrbooks.com)  
Hardcover, 28 pages

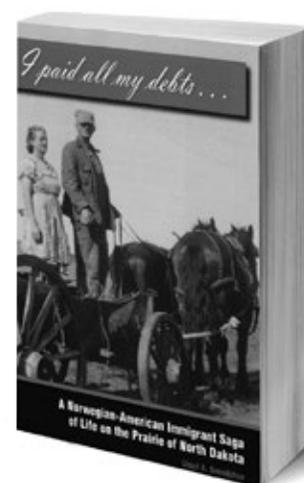
NAHA Lifetime Member Joan Buckley uses large, historic photos along with full-color contemporary images to tell the story of the Groth family's migration from Hallingdal to Emmet County, Iowa. The addition of family trees and maps enhance the content. While Buckley addresses her book's introduction to her family, her engaging storytelling makes this an interesting read for non-family, too. To order, contact [joanbuckley56@gmail.com](mailto:joanbuckley56@gmail.com).



***The Little Stream  
of Straum***

Dennis R. Winge  
[Virtualbookworm.com](http://Virtualbookworm.com)  
Publishing Inc. (2016)  
[virtualbookworm.com](http://virtualbookworm.com)  
Softcover, 143 pages

Winge documents the migration of the Straum (Strom) family from Skjold Parish in Rogaland to Palestine Township in Story County, Iowa, and then to Lac qui Parle Township in Minnesota. He builds on scholarly research of the Tysvær region to tell the larger story of emigration from the area. Use of maps, photos, and census data, plus a 30-page appendix of genealogy, support the story. To order, contact [dennisrwinge@hotmail.com](mailto:dennisrwinge@hotmail.com).



***I Paid All My Debts:  
A Norwegian-American  
Immigrant Saga of  
Life on the Prairie of  
North Dakota***

Lloyd A. Svendsbye  
Lutheran University Press  
(2009) [lutheranupress.org](http://lutheranupress.org)  
Softcover, 168 pages

Svendsbye begins his story in Norway but quickly focuses on his family's migration to Williams County, N.D., in 1904. This work stands out among family histories for its depiction of the hardship and challenges brought on by the drought and economic depression of the early 20th century. Endnotes, a chronology, genealogy, and index enhance the book. To order, contact [lutheranupress.org](http://lutheranupress.org).

## new to the archives

The most significant additions to the archives over the past few months are listed here. We welcome donations from members and friends illustrating all aspects of Norwegian-American history and culture. The current NAHA strategic plan emphasizes the continuing addition of new archival collections.

Do you have Norwegian-American letters, diaries, photographs, family histories, recordings, and community or congregational materials at home? Do you know of such items in the hands of others? If so, please contact us at [naha-archivists@stolaf.edu](mailto:naha-archivists@stolaf.edu). Perhaps this list of recent donations will suggest some possibilities. One set of materials was apparently long stored under a table at home, and another recent donation adds to our collection of papers from the first NAHA president. If you can no longer identify the individuals on old Norwegian-American family and church photographs, we might be willing to not only add them to our collection but also make some guesses about the subjects. We have continuing special interests in Canadian materials and in papers and photos that concern the experiences of post-World War II Norwegian immigrants. We are also interested in Norwegian-American involvement in the First World War, especially this year as we observe the centennial of that conflict.

For guidance on what we collect, consult the guidelines near the end of the Archives page on the NAHA website: [naha.stolaf.edu/archives/guidelines.pdf](http://naha.stolaf.edu/archives/guidelines.pdf). Please note that we do not collect Norwegian language books other than rare Norwegian-American imprints (books in Norwegian published in North America), *bygdebøker*, and other printed genealogical material.

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 JAN. 1 – MAR. 31, 2017

#### FAMILY LETTERS, HISTORIES, MEMOIRS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES:

- Blagen, Emma L. (1895–1983) Collection. Blagen lived most of her life in Decorah, Iowa. She was employed by John Longstreet Photograph Studio and the Decorah Meritol Co. The collection includes diaries kept between 1934 and

1978; family letters and postcards, 1913–60s; and 150-plus family photograph negatives, ca. early 1900s. **Added to P0539, Family Histories.** Donated by Beth Rotto.

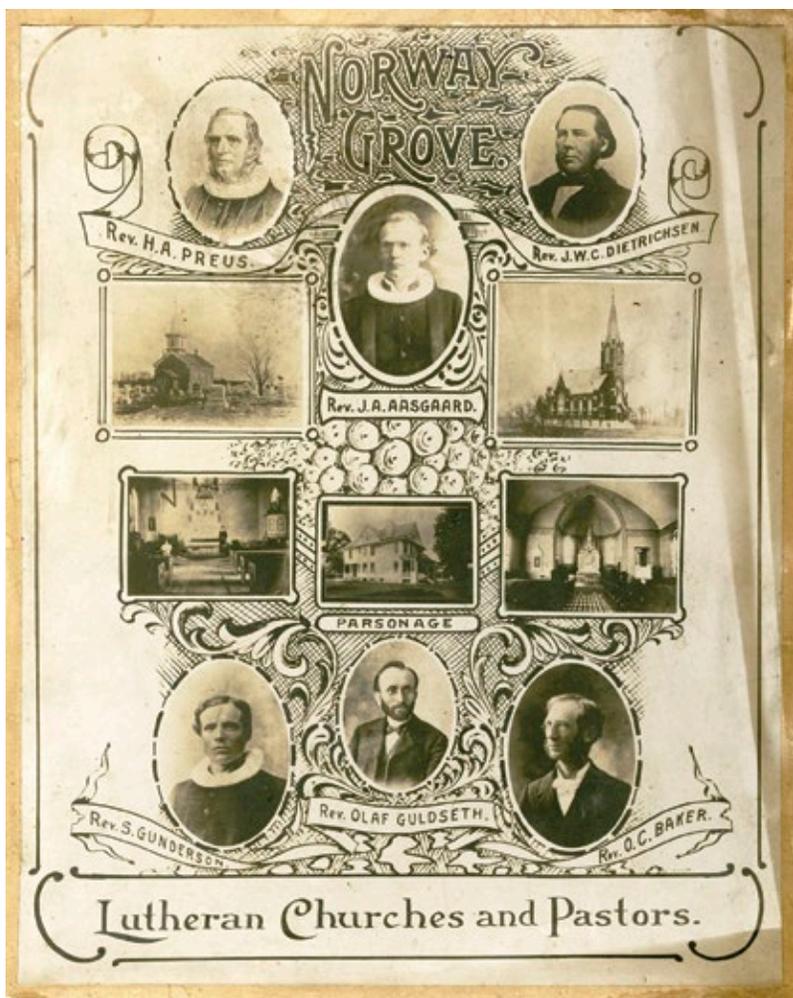
- Buckley, Joan Naglestad. "From a Rocky Farm in Norway: The immigration stories of our relatives who made America our home" (2017). Includes chapters: Crossing Alone: Thanks to Guri Syversdatter Sundbrei; Leaving the Family Farm:

Syver [Groth] was the first of ten siblings to voyage to America; and Heading Inland: Svend Halstenson Groth's letters describe the journey from New York to Wisconsin to Iowa. **Added to P0539, Family Histories.** Donated by Joan N. Buckley, NAHA Lifetime Member.

- Hanson, Haldore (1912–92) Family History. Hanson was a former war correspondent, State Department official, and economic development executive. Collection includes: "Profiles of the Marcus Hanson Family: Duluth, Minnesota 1882-1980"; "Recollections of Growing up in Duluth from the 1910s to 1930s" (topics: peddlers, 1918 forest fire, winter camping and World War I); and 100-plus family photographs, ca. 1920s–80. **Added to P0539, Family Histories.** Donated by Signe Hanson, NAHA Associate Member.

- Ristad, Ditlef G. (1863-1938) Sermons, 1916–38 (organized by liturgical calendar). Ristad was a minister at Edgerton and Manitowoc, Wisc.; president of three church schools; editor of *Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter*; first president of NAHA; president of the Trønderlag; and president of the eastern district of his church (1936–37). **Added to P0582, Ristad, Ditlef G. Papers.** Donated by Robert N. Ristad.

- Scandinavian Commercial Association, Lansing, Allamakee County, Iowa. Articles of Incorporation, 1865. **Added to P1523, Local History Collection.** Donated by Blaine Hedberg, NAHA Sustaining Member & board member.



Left: Commemorative photo collage, Norway Grove Lutheran Churches, De Forest, Wisc., ca. 1903. Below: Hellie family and farm site, ca. 1888.



- Vinje, Edward L. (1894–1920) travel journal (photocopied). Vinje and his mother, Serine Vinje Odegaard, toured Norway from May to August 1920. After returning to his home in Bottineau, N.D., Edward, a World War I army veteran, took his own life. The family believed that he suffered from “shell shock,” or post-traumatic stress disorder, after returning from military duty. **Added to P0539, Family Histories.** Donated by Janet Odegaard Meyer.

- Winge, Dennis R. "The Little Stream of Straum" (2016). Chapters include: Skjoldastraumen in

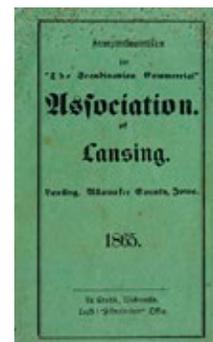
Tysvær; Emigration Fervor in Tysvær; Pioneer Years in Story County, Iowa; Move to Lac qui Parle, Minnesota; Appendix 1: Straum/Strom Family Genealogy; Appendix 2: Kalsheim Family Genealogy. **Added to P0539, Family Histories.** Donated by Dennis Winge.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

- Hellie family and farm site, ca. 1887–88. Christian Hanson Hellie's (1852–1929) farm was located in Sandes Township, Hanley Falls, Yellow Medicine County, Minn. **Added to P0655, Photograph Collection.** Donated by Charles Hellie, NAHA Associate Member.

- Norway Grove Lutheran churches and pastors, De Forest, Wisc. (composite photograph). Inset images of the parsonage, old stone church and red brick church; and the following previous ministers: Rev. H. A. Preus, Rev. J. W. C. Dietrichsen, Rev. S. Gunderson, Rev. O. Guldseth, Rev. O. C. Baker, and then-current pastor Rev. J. A. Aasgaard (served 1901–11). Most likely, the photograph was issued as a souvenir in honor of the dedication of the red brick church, May 17, 1903. **Added to P0655, Photograph Collection.** Donated by Pat Sween, NAHA Lifetime Member.

Articles of Incorporation for the Scandinavian Commercial Association of Lansing, Iowa, 1865.





NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN  
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# Currents

**The Newsletter of the  
Norwegian-American  
Historical Association**

Volume 165, Spring/Summer 2017

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**1911**

A group associated with St. Olaf College in Christiania (now Oslo). Standing, from left: Jørgen Thompson, Joseph Tetlie, Harry Tosdal, J. A. Holvick. Seated: Marie Gronvold, Agnes Kittilsby. According to the college newspaper, Gronvold and Kittilsby spent the summer at the University of Christiania after a short stay in France. Thompson, Tetlie, and Tosdal visited Oxford and London before touring Norway on bicycle. Kittilsby and Thompson served as St. Olaf faculty members at the time. From the J. Jorgen Thompson Collection.