A BIENNIAL UPDATE

At our biennial meeting in October, I updated NAHA members on happenings over the past two years, mainly in the areas of membership and events. For those who were not able to join us, I want to share some of this information with you here.

I’m happy to report that our overall membership is holding steady at just under 1,000 members, and about half of these are lifetime members. Since this type of membership is no longer offered, we know this stalwart group has been with us for decades. Collectively, these memberships formed the backbone of the Olaf Edvart Rølvaag Memorial Fund — an important source of funding for our operations. For this support of the NAHA mission, I say thank you!

The rest of us renew our memberships annually. And here, too, there’s good news: Annually renewed memberships have increased about 14% since 2013. And each year more members are choosing to renew at higher levels of support (i.e., sustaining and patron memberships). For this I also say thanks!

As reported in the last issue of Currents, last summer we offered an eight-week nonprofit management internship to a St. Olaf student, made possible by the Sigvald Qvale Fund. Our intern, Anna Quanbeck, focused much of her time on supporting the strategic goals of our membership committee, which included conducting and analyzing a member survey.

The survey helped us confirm what members value most in our Association. For example, the results validated something we already suspected — that members overwhelmingly believe in the mission of NAHA. They also hold our publishing program in high regard, with respondents ranking it as the most valuable member benefit. And finally, when it comes to bringing in new members, we verified that word of mouth from friends and family is our most effective recruiting tool.

Along with our publications, another way NAHA interprets the Norwegian-American experience is through our events. During my presentation, I shared programming highlights from the past two years, and I mentioned that our sister organization, NAHA-Norway, will hold its next triennial seminar at the Norwegian Emigration Museum near Hamar, Norway, in late June of 2020. I hope NAHA members will mark their calendars and consider attending the conference. We have already exploring additional group travel opportunities in conjunction with the seminar next summer, so keep an eye on your newsletter as plans develop.

Amy Boxcrud, Executive Director

REMEMBERING MARGARET HAYFORD O’LEARY BY ANNA QUANBECK ’19

St. Olaf College Professor of Norwegian Margaret Hayford O’Leary died on June 30 at age 67 after a two-year battle with cancer. An “expert in all things Norwegian,” Margaret was a member of the NAHA Board of Directors and a lifetime member of the Association.

Margaret’s lifelong passion for the Norwegian language began at Skogfjorden, Concordia College’s Norwegian Language Village, where she was a participant and later a staff member. She received her B.A. from Concordia College and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She served as professor of Norwegian at St. Olaf College for 40 years. At the time of her death, she was also the associate chair of Humanities and the immediate past president of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies (SASS).

In 2016, O’Leary was named the King Olav V Chair of Scandinavian-American Studies at St. Olaf College. She was the third holder of the chair, preceded by St. Olaf professors emeriti Todd Nichol and Odd Lovoll. In her capacity as the King Olav V Chair, O’Leary served on the NAHA Board of Directors and Publications Committee. In the Fall of 2017, O’Leary was awarded the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit for her “outstanding service in the interests of Norway.”

Professor emerita Solveig Zempel, a longtime colleague and friend of O’Leary, says, “She shared her love of Norway in so many ways. One that especially comes to mind is through music.” She was the lead singer of a folk group called the Lost Norwegians, and she led groups in singing at many occasions on campus. Her guitar was a fixture in her classroom, too, where she used songs to help her students learn Norwegian vocabulary.

Margaret is survived by her mother, her husband, three children, and two grandchildren, as well as extended family and many dear friends.

HOLIDAY GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Here’s a perfect gift for the history lovers on your list. Holiday gift memberships for 2019 include a gift-wrapped copy of Two Homeland: A Historian Considers His Life and Work by Odd S. Lovoll. Throughout the year, members will receive four issues of Currents, free use of the Archives, discounts on special events and publications, and the first issue of our newly relaunched journal, Norwegian-American Studies (coming Fall 2019). Memberships start at just $55 ($40 for students). Order by Dec. 18 to ensure delivery by Dec. 24. Visit naha.stolaf.edu for details.
The 2018 Biennial Member Meeting, held on Oct. 13 at St. Olaf College, focused on writing family histories and memoirs. Dr. Amy Weldon, author of The Writer’s Eye, gave the keynote presentation of the day, “Ancestors Are People, Too: Writing History in Images.” A professor of English at Luther College, Weldon also teaches writing classes to adults in Decorah, Iowa. Her examples and exercises encouraged members to go beyond facts and dates to write about history in fresh ways.

The Honorable John R. Tunheim, past president of NAHA, gave the keynote speech. Following the presentation, Lovoll signed copies of his books for attendees. In his talk, he encouraged members to undertake their own local history projects.

A Scandinavian Saga: Pioneering in New Folden Township, Marshall County, Minnesota, 1882-1905. In his talk, he encouraged members to undertake their own local history projects.

Following a salmon luncheon, NAHA held its biennial business meeting, and the staff and board shared highlights from the past two years. Former NAHA editor and professor emeritus Dr. Odd Lovoll presented the afternoon session. His memoir, Two Homelands: A Historian Considers His Life and Work, was recently copublished by NAHA and MNHS Press. His presentation, “Writing History — Memoirs,” reflected his strong ties to his native Norway and to his adopted homeland in America. He is currently the chair of the Minnesota Historical Preservation Office State Review Board.

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The Honorable John R. Tunheim, past president of NAHA, gave the second presentation, sharing his experiences in researching and writing A Scandinavian Saga: Pioneering in New Folden Township, Marshall County, Minnesota, 1882-1905. In his talk, he encouraged members to undertake their own local history projects.

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None of this work would be possible without the support of our members. Help us finish the year in strong financial standing by donating to our 2018 Annual Fund. Look for a year-end mailing, arriving soon in member mailboxes, or donate online at naha.stolaf.edu. Thank you!

NAHA WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS
Meet the six newest members of the Board of Directors, elected at the Biennial Member Meeting in October.

Kristin Anderson of St. Paul, Minn., serves as archivist and professor of art history at Augsburg University in Minneapolis. Her research interests include Scandinavian immigrant folk art and the altar paintings tradition of Norwegian Americans. She has served as the president of the Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians (MNSAH), and she is currently the chair of the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office State Review Board.

Marit Ann Barkve of Madison, Wis., taught Norwegian language and literature at UW-Madison and St. Olaf College during her career as a graduate student. She is currently employed as a major gifts officer at Wisconsin Public Television, a PBS affiliate, where she fundraises for television programming and Wisconsin-focused documentaries.

Gracia Grindal of St. Paul, Minn., is professor emerita of rhetoric at Luther Seminary. She has also served on the English department faculty of Luther College. Her research interests include prominent Norwegian-American women, and she is the author of a book on Scandinavian women hymn writers.

Paul Rolvaag of St. Paul, Minn., worked in the farm equipment and rural finance fields until his retirement in 2016. As a student, he interned three summers with the Minnesota Historical Society, working primarily at the Ramsey House and also participating in Robert Wheeler’s fur trade research expedition to the boundary waters. He is a past board member of the Norland Heritage Foundation in St. Paul, Minn.

Ingrid Urberg of Camrose, Alberta is associate professor of Scandinavian studies on the Augustana campus of the University of Alberta in Camrose, where she offers a wide variety of Norwegian language and Scandinavian literature and culture courses. Her research focuses on Norwegian-American literature, polar literature, and northern personal narratives, including Svalbard narratives. Urberg has also taught at Luther College and the University of Oregon.

NAHA Executive Committee, 2018-20
In a special meeting on Oct. 22, the Board of Directors elected officers for the 2018-20 biennium.

President Dennis Gimmestad St. Louis Park, Minn.
Vice-president Debbie Miller St. Paul, Minn.
Secretary Ronald Johnson Madison, Wis.
Treasurer Scott Knudson St. Paul, Minn.
Representative at large Kim Kittilsby Auburn, Wash.

Directors re-elected to a second term:
• Sarah Halverson Brunko, Andover, Minn.
• Ronald Johnson, Madison, Wis.
• Kim Kittilsby, Auburn, Wash.
• Daron Olson, Richmond, Ind.
• Bruce Willis, Wayzata, Minn.

ANNUAL FUND APPEAL
As 2018 winds down, NAHA looks back at another year of mission-driven programming. We partnered with Minnesota Historical Society Press to copublish the memoirs of Odd Lovoll and released the index volume for our From America to Norway series. In addition to our biennial meeting, members gathered at Norway House in May for our Spring Member Meetup with runologist Henrik Williams. Throughout the year, our staff and volunteers assisted dozens of scholars, students, and family historians in their archival research. None of this work would be possible without the support of our members. Help us finish the year in strong financial standing by donating to our 2018 Annual Fund. Look for a year-end mailing, arriving soon in member mailboxes, or donate online at naha.stolaf.edu. Thank you!
In the late 19th century, Norwegian immigrants settled along the North Shore of Lake Superior, where they used their fishing and logging skills from the old country to build a thriving fishing industry. The North Shore Fisherfolk Tour, Aug. 28–30, drew on the expertise of local residents with stories related to fishing, as well as museums and historians who are working to preserve the archival and material record of this region. Led by NAHA President Dennis Gimmes-tad and Executive Director Amy Boxrud, 15 members of NAHA departed by bus from the Twin Cities and explored the North Shore from Duluth to Hovland. The first stop was the North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum in Tofte, where Virginia Reiner, museum president, oriented the group. Folk musician Arna Rennan entertained with immigrant songs, and Dale Tormondsen, whose grandfather was one of the area’s original settlers, shared stories of fishing life in early Tofte.

On day two, the group traveled to the village of Hovland, guided by Phil Anderson, professor emeritus of history at North Park University. After viewing the historic Hovland Dock, participants visited Trinity Lutheran Church, where they toured the church’s new addition and learned of the congregation’s unique history. On the way back to Tofte, the group toured the Grand Marais harbor, guided by a volunteer from Cook County Historical Society.

The final day of the tour highlighted the community of Knife River, where participants met with boat restorer Paul von Goertz, fisherman Steve Dahl, and other civic boosters. The group’s last stop was the historic fish dealer docks at the Duluth harbor, guided by third-generation fisherman Stu Sievertson.

“There’s a lot of renewed interest in this region’s maritime history — it’s undergoing a huge revival,” Reiner says. Look for developments as she and a group of local history enthusiasts find new ways to share North Shore fishing history with the public.

PLAN YOUR FISHERFOLK TOUR

If you missed the North Shore Fisherfolk Tour, you can still take in these maritime attractions along Lake Superior’s North Shore. Sites are listed in order of appearance when driving northeast on Minnesota Highway 61.

**Split Rock Lighthouse**
3713 Split Rock Lighthouse Road, 20 miles NE of Two Harbors
218-226-6372
This national historic landmark offers a look at maritime life in a spectacular setting. One of Minnesota’s most iconic attractions, the lighthouse has been restored to its 1920 appearance. The visitors center is open year-round, and guided tours are available May through October. mnhs.org/splitrock

**North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum**
7136 Minn. Hwy. 61, Tofte
218-663-7050
With a specific emphasis on the commercial fishing industry, the museum offers the region’s most complete explanation of North Shore commercial fishing history. commercialfishingmuseum.org

**Cook County Historical Museum**
8 S Broadway Ave, Grand Marais
218-387-2883
This 19th-century lighthouse keeper’s residence is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The museum’s rotating exhibits are currently themed “Dog Sleds, Snowshoes, Winter Work and Play.” cookcountyhistory.org

**Hovland Dock**
Just off Chicago Bay Road (Co. Rd. 88)
9 miles NE of Grand Marais
Visitors walk at their own risk on this concrete dock, built in the early 1900s. The last of its kind on the North Shore, it served as a busy stop for passenger and cargo ships at the once-thriving fishing village of Hovland. A picturesque cluster of abandoned longshoreman cabins stands nearby.

**Isle Royale National Park**
Travelers with more time to explore can visit Isle Royale National Park, accessible only by seaplane from Grand Marais or by ferry from Grand Portage (and two points in Michigan).
KREFTING CAPTURED FISHING LIFE

By Jeff Sauve

In a 1977 interview, 80-year-old Nels Norman of Hovland, Minn., stated matter-of-factly, “When you are a fisherman you have to know how to handle your boat. The ones that didn’t know how drowned.” His oral history, along with 30 other Lake Superior Norwegian-American commercial fishermen, was conducted over a two-year period by noted U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service research biologist Dr. Laurits W. Krefting.

Krefting had intended to conduct a multiyear project interviewing American commercial fishermen, other Lake Superior Norwegian-American Studies that didn’t know how drowned.” His study centered on personal contacts with “old time” fisher people from Minnesota, a multiyear project interviewing Americans.

In a letter to Krefting in September 1978, NAHA Editor Kenneth O. Bjork was delighted to learn of Krefting’s project, “Norwegian Fisherman in the Lake Superior Region.” He strongly encouraged the researcher to consider submitting an article for inclusion in Norwegian-American Studies. The article never took shape because Krefting unexpectedly died two months later in November 1978.

His project, including unique tape recordings and transcripts, were later donated to NAHA. The following are some examples of the richness of the collection.

COFFEE’S ON

When Krefting asked Ragvald Sve (1902–89) why he emigrated from Leksvik, Norway, in 1921, Sve bluntly replied, “I could see no future.” Working on a farm, Sve recollected, “I first started out as a goat herder with my brother when I was about 7 or 8 years old. We had an average of about 45 goats and we put in 10 hours a day.” The milk was used for making goat cheese, or gjetost. An uncle in Clovis, Alberta, Canada, arranged his passage. By 1924, Sve had made his way to Two Harbors, Minn., and later took up commercial fishing in 1927.

One memory he told Krefting related to the unexpected and hazardous life on the lake. It was around 3 p.m. on a beautiful, warm day in late April, when two young brothers decided to venture onto Superior and set their herring nets.

Their father had just come in from fishing and said, “I have the coffee on; you better have some before you go out.” Sve noted, “and that is what saved them.” For as soon as the men gathered around the kitchen table in the shack by the shore, a sudden northwest wind and dark clouds arose, and the lake churned white. A late-season blizzard had struck.

Unknown to them at the time, farther up the shore were two brothers-in-law who had already left to set their hook lines for trout. Two days later their boat and frozen bodies were found. “Northwest is the most dangerous wind you can have,” Sve concluded.

FISH BONES AND SALTED PORK

“The old timers had to stay healthy because it was a long way to see a doctor,” said Thomas Hansen (1907–84) of Little Marais, Minn., concurred. “I believe people had to know more about taking care of themselves than they do today.”

Fenstad added. He explained one of his home remedies: “When a fish bone got into your finger a piece of salt pork was put on it and wrapped up. The salt drew out the fish bone.”

When Krefting asked how health problems were handled, Fenstad replied, “The closest place to get medicine was in Two Harbors.”

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DANCING UP A STORM

Before completion of Minnesota’s Highway 61 on the North Shore in the late 1920s, fishing communities along the rocky, timbered coast offered limited opportunities for social gatherings due to isolation, communication, and conveyance. When Krefting asked Ragvald Houle (1895–1983) of Little Marais, Minn., “Didn’t the fisherman get together once in a while?” Houle responded with fond memories of dances held on Saturday nights, usually at the local schoolhouse, and celebrations like Norway’s Constitution Day on May 17, or Syttende Mai.

Nearly everyone chipped in to continue on page 10…
continued from page 9…

few dollars to purchase supplies for the event. Fishermen and their families came from all directions—Beaver Bay, Schroeder, and other locations. A steamboat captain supplied whiskey and as many as 16 big barrels of beer from the Fitgers Brewery in Duluth. Houle recalled:

“The party would last a whole week and everybody was happy for a long time after that. The coffee we bought came in sacks and we had to roast it. Before we got a coffee grinder we rolled the coffee beans with a bottle. …And then we had smoked fish and salted fish. But I am partial to boiled fish. I grew up that way.”

During one dance a snowstorm struck and no one could return home. Houle said, “But everybody had plenty of food and they slept wherever they could. The violin player played so much that he had blisters on his hands. They didn’t want to hear anything else.”

Chris Tormodson (1888–1984) of Tifft, Minn., reminisced that dances were held mostly in the winter. “The women would dress up. They wore men’s rubbers because of the snow. They would get up on the floor and dance to beat heck.”

Another excellent source recently digitized and available through the Minnesota Reflections website (reflections.mndigital.org) provides 10 North Shore oral histories conducted in 1977 for the “Fishing Oral History Project.” Both this project and Krefting’s overlap in creation dates and individuals interviewed. And for NAHA, the Krefting Collection, once overlooked, has emerged as a unique gem in recent years.

FAMILY LETTERS, HISTORIES, MEMOIRS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES:

Irvin B. Anderson material. These items belonged to Irvin B. Anderson, who was a St. Olaf College student in the 1920s. The material consists of two St. Olaf College directories (1926–27, 1927–28), a Minnesota College Athletic Manual (1927–28), a small math textbook from 1860 that belonged to one of Irvin’s relatives, and a Norwegian-American Games program (1925) from the Norwegian-American Centennial. Added to P1724 Irvin B. Anderson Collection. Donated by Irvin B. Anderson.

Ivar Hinderaker journals. Seven books kept by Ivar Hinderaker, a traveling minister in Minnesota and South Dakota in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He was born in Norway in 1851 and emigrated in 1872 with two cousins and two neighbors. The contents of the books range from church records to personal histories of his family to account ledgers. Added to P1723 Ivar Hinderaker Papers. Donated by James Hinderaker, associate member, and Eric Hinderaker.

PHOTOGRAPHS:


• Aaker family reunion photographs. Print photographs, along with several digital images, of the Aaker family reunion at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn., June 18, 1978. Also donated with these images was a copy of a portion of The Aaker Saga: A Family History. Added to P0001 Aaker Family Papers. Donated by Leigh Deveny Mathison, associate member. 

new to the archives

Some 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. Do you have Norwegian-American letters, diaries, photographs, family histories, or community and congregational materials at home? Do you know of such items in the hands of others? If so, please contact the archives at naha-archives@stolaf.edu. Perhaps this list of recent donations will suggest some possibilities. We also have continuing interests in Canadian materials and in materials relating to the experiences of post–World War II Norwegian immigrants.

NAHA collection guidelines are available on the archives page on our website: naha.stolaf.edu/Archive/guidelines.pdf. Please be aware that we do not collect Norwegian language books other than rare Norwegian-American imprints (books published in North America for a Norwegian-language audience), bygdebøker, and other printed genealogical material. The Archives continue to benefit from the generosity of members and friends who have made important donations, and we welcome your help in building the collection. 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 – JUNE, 2018

• S. Christopher Boxrud Papers.

• Aaker family reunion photographs.

• Boxrud photographs, business cards, and correspondence.

• Krefting Papers. Both this project and the Krefting Collection, once overlooked, have made important donations, and we welcome your help in building the collection. 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.
Ole G. Felland was born in Koshkonong in Dane County, Wisc., in 1853. His parents were farmers who emigrated from the Telemark region of Norway in 1846. Felland deviated from the family trade and attended Concordia Seminary in Missouri. He served as a minister in Minnesota until 1881, when he accepted an invitation from Rev. B. J. Muus to teach at St. Olaf College. In addition to teaching English, Norwegian, Latin, mathematics, and Greek, Felland was an avid photographer, and his images create an invaluable visual history of both St. Olaf College and Norwegian-American life. Here, Felland captures a croquet game on the lawn of Ole and Serena Sundby in Columbia County, Wisc.