Participate in Strategic Planning

NAHA Welcomes New Archivist

Migration Data for Genealogists

Giving Voice to “America Photos”

New to the Archives

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION | SPRING/SUMMER 2019 VOLUME 172
ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF NAHA

In my update last spring, I brought members up to speed on progress toward our strategic plan for 2016–2019. We are nearing the end of that plan, and it’s time for the board to evaluate where we have been and look ahead to the future.

Looking back over the past three years, the association has navigated several significant changes, including the retirements of our longtime editor and archivists and the relaunch of our journal, Norwegian-American Studies. (Learn about our new archivist, Kristina Warner, on page 3.) We had many firsts, such as completing our first member tour to Norway and conducting our first membership survey. We celebrated receiving a planning grant for the digitization of the O. E. Rølvaag Papers, one of our largest collections, and we look forward to the start of construction on a new, shared special collections facility in Rølvaag Memorial Library.

We’ve also had some challenges: While we enjoyed modest growth in our annually renewing memberships, we did not meet the more aggressive member recruitment goals laid out in our plan. As we head into the final stretch of our current strategic plan, work on our 2020–23 plan has already begun. The first step was to take stock of the current state of NAHA by surveying the staff and board, and by reaching out to some of our partner institutions. At both its spring and fall meetings this year, the board will devote part of its time to envisioning the association’s future. These discussions will shape our goals and inform our work plans for the next three years and beyond.

It’s a great time to hear from you, our members. Do you have feedback you would like to share about our archives, publications, or events? Are there specific goals or areas of programming you would like to see NAHA focus on in the next three years? To add your voice to our strategic planning process, contact me with your thoughts or suggestions at naha@stolaf.edu or by calling 507-786-3221.

While I’m on the topic of strategic planning, I’d like to take this opportunity to thank our talented board of directors. Board members volunteer their time and travel from locations as far away as the Pacific Northwest, the East Coast, and Canada to lead and govern the association. We are fortunate to have this committed group charting a course for NAHA.

Amy Boxrud, Executive Director

Kristina Warner recently joined NAHA as its new archivist. She earned her master’s degree in library and information science (MLIS) from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where she focused on archives and records management, digital preservation, and digital asset management. During her time in Madison, she worked in the University of Wisconsin archives, the archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the library of the U.S. Geological Survey.

Kristina looks forward to helping the association build its collection and share it with others. “I’m excited to keep learning about the collection, so I can help researchers find exactly what they are looking for,” she says. She hopes to encourage new scholarship by identifying underutilized collections.

She also looks forward to enhancing NAHA finding aids to better assist researchers. “I value these resources, as they help immensely in the discoverability of information,” she says.

Kristina began her half-time appointment on March 18.

Access the Archives by Appointment or Online

To better serve patrons, the NAHA archives are now open by appointment Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Appointments ensure that archival materials are pulled and ready for patrons, and that staff members are available at the time of the visit.

To schedule an appointment, send a note to NAHA Archivist Kristina Warner at naha-archivist@stolaf.edu or call 507-786-3450. Use of the archives is free for NAHA members and students; non-members pay a daily fee. Find details on the NAHA website.

NAHA provides direct access to finding aids on its website, naha.stolaf.edu, on the “Archives” page of the site. One link offered there is to Leif, the online search engine for NAHA manuscripts and photographs. Leif enables keyword searches of collections, groups of documents, and images. Researchers will find a number of other helpful indexes on the site, too, including the Rowberg Index to biographical clippings and the Hovland Index of bygdebøker (local history books published in Norway, which are housed in the main floor reference room of Rølvaag Memorial Library).
**Rølvaag Library Awarded NEH Grant**

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) recently awarded St. Olaf College a $300,000 Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant for renovations to Rølvaag Memorial Library that will create a new special collections facility. The grant program seeks to leverage federal funds against private investment to help create and sustain the nation’s humanities infrastructure. The program challenges the college to raise an additional $900,000 in matching funds. The estimated total cost for the project is $4.5 million.

“We’re absolutely thrilled. Receiving this grant is a significant step forward in our fundraising efforts,” says Mary Barbosa-Jerez, head of strategy for library collections and archives at Rølvaag Memorial Library. “Even more important than the funding itself is the promise of what it will enable us to do.”

The NEH, one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States, awards grants for top-rated proposals examined by panels of independent, external reviewers. The college’s grant was one of 233 awarded nationwide in March of 2019 in a granting cycle totaling $28.6 million.

“We’re thrilled. Receiving this grant is a significant step forward in our fundraising efforts.”

— Mary Barbosa-Jerez

**More Sources of Migration Data**

While church records are a popular source of migration data (see Currents, Spring 2018), police records can be another source for this information. These are not criminal records. Instead, they were generated by the police when emigrants registered that they were departing Norway. These records survive for several of Norway’s cities.

Records for the period 1867–1930 can be searched on Norway’s Digital Archives website, digitalarkivet.no/en (adding the forward slash and “en” to the URL brings up the English language version of the site). For example, author Ole Rølvaag’s emigration record is found with an “advanced person search,” limited by “category = emigration register.” Only the “last name” field needs to be specified. Using a wild card character (“*”) and searching for “rølv*g” produces records with the character (*) and searching for “rølvaag” brings up the English language version of the site).

By clicking on ship names reveals an index of departures for 1896, which can be used to find the ship on which Rølvaag left Norway. In the index of departures for 1896, clicking on ship names reveals the SS Norge belonging to the Thingvalla Line and made an early August voyage. It shows a departure date of 8 August, and a New York arrival on 19 August. The ship manifest, found on the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation website, libertyellisfoundation.org, shows that the SS Norge left from Christiania, with a date of arrival in New York of 20 August, 1896. Ole Pedersen, 20, a laborer from Norway, is included in the list of passengers. His destination is shown as Elk Point, South Dakota. via Xania (an abbreviation for Christiansia, present-day Oslo). His ticket was paid for in America.

The SS Norge in the 1890s, when it carried Ole Rølvaag to America. At right: Rølvaag is number five in a series of names in the police emigrant registry.

**Diary Provides Data**

Ole Rølvaag recorded his emigration in his diary, found in the NAHA Archives (Ole Edvard Rølvaag Collection, POS84). The entries corroborate the information found in the Thingvalla police records.

- The first entry is: “July 29, 1896 — At last I am on my way!”
- Two days later he writes an entry while in Trondheim.
- A few days later: “Now I have arrived in Christiansia and the SS Norge leaves here tomorrow at one o’clock in the afternoon.”
- August 20: “We have finally arrived in New York, the metropolis of the world.”
- And later: “I finally reached my destination, Elk Point, South Dakota. Elk Point was the home of his uncle, Jakob, who paid for his passage to America.

The ship manifest, found on the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation website, libertyellisfoundation.org, shows that the SS Norge left from Christiania, with a date of arrival in New York of 20 August, 1896. Ole Pedersen, 20, a laborer from Norway, is included in the list of passengers. His destination is shown as Elk Point, South Dakota.

Visit norwayheritage.com/ norwegian-emigration-records.htm to read more about Norway’s police records.

**NAHA Legacy Circle**

The Norwegian-American Historical Association gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the following individuals, whose planned gifts to the association have been received recently.

MANER MELSTAD, THE MELSTAD SISTERS, AND NEIGHBORS ENJOY FRESH WATER-MELON FROM MARIAN'S GARDEN, SOUTH DAKOTA, CIRCA 1910. PRIVATE COLLECTION, COURTESY HELEN OLSON LUNDWALL.

“America photos” are nearly as plentiful as the America letters they were enclosed with, sent by emigrants to their families back home in Norway. “They did a [materials] collection,” writes Sigrid Lien about her own research into Norwegian-American Migration. “Mrs. Kallestad’s home was like a museum.”

Lien’s completed book, she watched as an elderly man gently ran his fingers across a print of a Midwestern farm wagon laden with corn. He recounted for a local reporter step by step how corn was harvested on the farm in America where his father had worked as a young field hand. The people who created, sent, and received the America photos are all gone, but the images still elicit longing in viewers.

Here’s more from Lien on her research and on reading history in photographs.

“You’ve written that you were inspired by Theodore Oslie [historian and former editor for NAHA] and his approach to history from the bottom up. As you were doing your research, what did it mean in practical terms to be working from the bottom up?”

Lien: When archivists would direct me toward the more established sources, I would try to avoid that. I would tell them I wanted to come and stay in the house for so long in Norwegian-American migration research. I didn’t want the “hero” stories. That was how I found the archive of the sailor’s wife, Josefa Kallestad, at NAHA. I thought it was so moving and fascinating because it was a story about an ordinary woman’s life and all the sort of messy things that life is about. It’s about joy but also disappointments, small sorrows, boredom sometimes, longing, a feeling of ethnicity and closeness to your family—all the things that would be strongly present in a woman’s life in an immigrant community in Chicago.

I felt I got to know her in a way through the archive. She had whole albums of postcards of Norwegian landscapes and there would be Norwegian song texts written underneath. I imagined her leafing through that album humming those Norwegian songs. The archive also contains information about her trips back to Norway and how, when she came back to Chicago, she would have an open house and the neighbors would come.

There would be a little note in the local newspaper telling about this event and how she had brought so many beautiful things back from Norway. “Mrs. Kallestad’s home was like a museum.”

Another chapter of the book is about a woman who worked as a photographer, Mina Westbye. In a kind of closed loop of history, where material that’s been used by past researchers becomes the “important” material that in turn is recommended to you. You had to get past that to find the lesser-known individual stories you were after.

You mention that more-established source material was offered to you at first. It sounds like you encountered this in your research, right?

Lien: Individual yes, but they are also, I think, very typical stories and the images are very typical. There are tropes in this material that reoccur, like the image that was sent home to Norway so frequently of the family in front of the farm—first a sod house and then later the farm, and first chickens, then horses, and then a motor car. These images were sent in order to show that the choice to emigrate had been a good one.

“I could have worked for the rest of my life on this,” says Sigrid Lien about the project of finding and selecting photos for her book Pictures of Longing: Photography and the Norwegian-American Migration. “America photos” are nearly as plentiful as the America letters they were enclosed with, sent by emigrants to their families back home in Norway.

Lien sees the America photos as wordless messages in their own right, with the power to tell their own stories. A professor of art history and photography studies at the University of Bergen, she also writes in her book about the experience of immigrants who worked as photographers. Her work was published in Norway in 2009 and came out in English translation last year from the University of Minnesota Press. (See Solveig Zemplé’s review on page 9.)

“They did a [materials] collection weekend inSETESDAL, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. "People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. "People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. "People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. "People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. "People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. "People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "They did a [materials] collection weekend in Setesdal, Lien says. “People came to visit just a handful of archives in the United States, including NAHA. In Norway, she focused on material found in two regions that had among the highest levels of emigration, Setesdal in Aust-Agder and Jæren in Rogaland. "Th...
American children, dressed in their finest. They wish to be photographed to bring back home to Norway of their new status and their farming tools. They told me that it was common but the usual. “I will send you an image of her so you can see how beautiful she was.”

You’re describing a lot of interplay, where photos and letters together are telling a story. What is unique about photos as a way of understanding history? How are they different from other artifacts, like household objects or letters?

LIEN: I think it was quite important for them. It was costly and it was not always easy to have your farm photographed or your family photographed when you didn’t live in a small town but as a settler somewhere. But I know that many immigrants did this because one of the first things that I did when I started my research was to read the volumes of America letters that Orm Øverland had edited. [Øverland’s work was recently translated and published collaboratively by NAHA and the University of Minnesota Press.] It’s amazing to see how often photographs are mentioned in these letters. They always say, “Could you please send me your photograph?” or “Could you please send a picture of the farm back home in Norway?” They long for photographs and they exchange photographs. They say, “I want to send you my portrait, but I need to wait until spring—because I hope some traveling photographer will come by then.” or “I have to go into this or that small town to have it taken.”

Sometimes the price is mentioned and we can understand that it wasn’t something that you did every day. But it was something that was quite valued.
Significant additions to the archives over the past few months are listed below. We welcome donations from members and friends illustrating all aspects of Norwegian-American history and culture, including Canadian materials and materials relating to post–World War II Norwegian immigrants.

Do you have Norwegian-American letters, diaries, photographs, family histories, or community or congregational materials at home? Do you know of such items in the hands of others? If so, please contact the archives at naha@stolaf.edu. NAHA collection guidelines are available on the “Archives” page of our website, naha.stolaf.edu/archives/guidelines.pdf.

We welcome your help in building the NAHA collection. Although we aren’t able to acknowledge all donations here, we do appreciate every donation.

DONATED OCTOBER 2018 – MARCH 2019

FAMILY LETTERS, DOCUMENTS, AND HISTORIES
• Rossing, Victor B. (1889–1971) correspondence (36 letters to his parents while a first-year student at what is now Augsburg University, Minneapolis, 1907–1908). Rossing was the son of Lars and Helena Rossing, proprietors of a general store in Argyle, Wisconsin, which opened in 1870 and was in business for over a century. The letters contain comments regarding 1907 football games (Carlisle Indians and Chicago University which opened in 1870 and was in business for over a century). The letters contain comments regarding 1907 football games (Carlisle Indians and Chicago University which opened in 1870 and was in business for over a century). The letters contain comments regarding 1907 football games (Carlisle Indians and Chicago University which opened in 1870 and was in business for over a century). The letters contain comments regarding 1907 football games (Carlisle Indians and Chicago University which opened in 1870 and was in business for over a century).

• Krantz, Gordon C. and Carol B. Claus and Christine: a Double Biography. The Story of Our Parents, Americans from Scandinavia (2013, self-published). 180-page softbound volume. Christine Mickelson (1885–1956) was born in Hadeland, Norway, and immigrated to the U.S. in 1901. Her family settled in Red Wing, Minnesota, where she found work as a maid and cook. Claus Henning Krantz (1882–1945), born in Småland, Sweden, immigrated to the U.S. in 1900. He also settled near Red Wing and worked as a woodworker. They were married in June 1908 and had five children. In 1927, the family moved to a small farm near Red Wing. The book includes many anecdotes about life on the farm during the Depression. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Gordon C. Krantz.

• MacKinnon, Marcia. Hommedal Family in America (1996, self-published). 46 pages, head bound. Family history commencing with shoemaker Sjur Torbjorn Hommedal (1823–1887) and Ingeborg Sjursdatter Selje (1825–1907) of Vossstrand, Voss, Norway, who married in 1849 and immigrated to the U.S. in 1852. The family settled near Wanamingo, Goodhue County, Minnesota. In 1906, their son, Sjur (Siver) purchased the upscale Falls House Hotel in Cannon Falls, Minnesota, which he operated until turning it over to a son, Thorwald, in 1926. The landmark hotel remained in the family until 1953 (born down in 1967). Included are several land deeds pertaining to the Falls House Hotel (operated since 1855). Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Marcia MacKinnon.

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED MATERIALS

• Johnson, Janice Uggen. Nordenhaug Evangelical Lutheran Church and Cemetery, Leaf Lake, Otter Tail County, Minnesota (2018, self-published). 288-page softbound volume. Reviewed Michael Dennis Browne, writes: “In Erik Storlie’s superbly detailed and touching memoir, we see how, by way of many tensions with both parents, and by an evolving liberating attention to their veiled individuality... he gains insights into their hidden natures and comes to an awareness of what he calls at one point ‘sorrow beyond my fathoming.’ ” The book touches on Storlie family history in eastern South Dakota. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Janice Uggen Johnson, associate member.

• Rand, Lois M. A Journal of the U.S. Embassy Residence, Oslo, Norway. September 1979–February 1981 (2018, self-published). 288-page coil-bound volume (2 copies, plus original typescript manuscript). A detailed daily journal kept by Lois Rand while her spouse, Sidney Anders Rand, served as the U.S. Ambassador to Norway, 1980–1981. She writes, “I was sure we would want to remember the process and the people involved if Sidney’s appointment actually came to pass, and I was equally sure we wouldn’t unless we had some help. So I began making notes of people, events, and anything noteworthy so we could remember.” Addition: Lois M. Rand Journal Donated by Lois M. Rand, lifetime member.


• Mickelson (1885–1956) was born in Hadeland, Norway, and immigrated to the U.S. in 1901. Her family settled in Red Wing, Minnesota, where she found work as a maid and cook. Claus Henning Krantz (1882–1945), born in Småland, Sweden, immigrated to the U.S. in 1900. He also settled near Red Wing and worked as a woodworker. They were married in June 1908 and had five children. In 1927, the family moved to a small farm near Red Wing. The book includes many anecdotes about life on the farm during the Depression. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Gordon C. Krantz.

• Johnson, Janice Uggen. Nordenhaug Evangelical Lutheran Church and Cemetery, Leaf Lake, Otter Tail County, Minnesota (2018, self-published). 288-page softbound volume. Reviewed Michael Dennis Browne, writes: “In Erik Storlie’s superbly detailed and touching memoir, we see how, by way of many tensions with both parents, and by an evolving liberating attention to their veiled individuality... he gains insights into their hidden natures and comes to an awareness of what he calls at one point ‘sorrow beyond my fathoming.’ ” The book touches on Storlie family history in eastern South Dakota. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Janice Uggen Johnson, associate member.

• Rand, Lois M. A Journal of the U.S. Embassy Residence, Oslo, Norway. September 1979–February 1981 (2018, self-published). 288-page coil-bound volume (2 copies, plus original typescript manuscript). A detailed daily journal kept by Lois Rand while her spouse, Sidney Anders Rand, served as the U.S. Ambassador to Norway, 1980–1981. She writes, “I was sure we would want to remember the process and the people involved if Sidney’s appointment actually came to pass, and I was equally sure we wouldn’t unless we had some help. So I began making notes of people, events, and anything noteworthy so we could remember.” Addition: Lois M. Rand Journal Donated by Lois M. Rand, lifetime member.

A meeting of the Eastern District Norwegian Synod held at the Immanuel Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Winchester, Wisconsin. On the left sits Pastor Even Johnson Homme, founder of the Wittenberg Orphans’ Home. His wife, Ingeborg Even Johnson Homme, is on the far right. This photo was made by Andreas Larsen Dahl, a Norwegian immigrant born in Valdres, Norway, in 1844. Dahl worked as an itinerant and studio photographer in Wisconsin during the 1870s, and eventually became a minister in 1883.

—ANNA QUANBECK