BUILDING CONNECTIONS, PROMOTING SCHOLARSHIP

As I mentioned in last spring’s column in Currents, members of the NAHA Board of Directors devoted much of their time together in 2019 to developing a strategic plan for 2020–22. Our aim was to design a grassroots process, with committee members setting the goals they will be working toward for the next three years, as well as identifying the actions that will be most effective to achieve them.

This has been an enlightening and energizing process, and by the time this newsletter is printed, a version of our plan will be finalized and available on our website. I encourage you to look it over. Our board has set some significant goals for the work of the association, as reflected in the plan.

Over the next three years, as NAHA connects scholars, researchers, and the public to Norwegian-American history, we will encourage scholarship by creative use of our programs, resources, and relationships. In doing so, we hope that our work of sharing and interpreting the Norwegian-American experience can help to provide context for the migration occurring in so many places around the globe today.

Here are some of the goals included in our plan:

• Our membership committee will plan events that attract and engage members in the Upper Midwest, while supporting of NAHA makes all the difference. Thanks for all you do to support the work of NAHA and to share our programs, resources, and relationships. In doing so, we hope that our work of sharing and interpreting the Norwegian-American experience can help to provide context for the migration occurring in so many places around the globe today.

• Our publications committee will focus on stimulating the field of Norwegian-American studies, building connections between scholars and their audiences, and broadening our approach to publications.

• The archives committee will increase the capacity of our archives program while also preparing to move our extensive manuscript collection of letters, diaries and ledgers, newspaper clippings, obituaries, congregational records, family and local histories, and more to the new Special Collections facility in the Rolvaag Library at St. Olaf College.

• Our membership committee will plan events that attract and engage members in the Upper Midwest, while we continue to cultivate and support memberships throughout the Norwegian-American diaspora with our publications, tours, and online presence.

• The development committee will continue to improve our systems for annual giving, while it builds our endowment, especially in support of our expanding archives program.

Ambitious? Yes, but I’m confident that our board and staff will make both meaningful and measurable progress toward these goals over the next three years.

The success of our strategic plan will also depend on you, our members and supporters. Your engagement in and support of NAHA makes all the difference. Thanks for all you do to support the work of NAHA and to share our mission to collect, preserve, and interpret the Norwegian-American experience. We want NAHA to continue to make a positive difference in today’s world, and with your support it will.

Amy Boxrud, Executive Director

on the cover
Community members read aloud from the Hol bygdebok during a local history event at the Hol Bygdemuseum in Hagafoss, Norway, summer 1959.

in brief

JOIN NAHA IN NORWAY THIS JUNE

Summer might seem right around the corner, but it’s still possible to plan an adventure in Norway with NAHA.

NAHA-Norge offers its triennial seminar at the Norwegian Emigrant Museum near Hamar this summer. “Nordic Identity Formation in a Transnational Context” will be held June 18–21. Enjoy the company of fellow NAHA members from both sides of the Atlantic while learning about the ties between Nordic emigrants and their countries of origin. For more information, visit nahanorge.wordpress.com.

Following the seminar, NAHA offers a week-long tour, “Artistry and Industry of Norway.” Traveling from Oslo to Bergen via Telemark and Hardanger, the tour blends cultural, industrial, and agricultural history. Highlights include the Rjukan-Notodden Industrial Heritage Site, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a Telemark Canal cruise. More information, including a detailed itinerary, is available at naha.stolaf.edu. At press time, space is still available. Contact the NAHA office with questions. To reserve your spot, contact Nicole Anderson at Burton Overseas, nicole@burtonoverseas.com, 800-843-0602.

SPRING MEMBER MEETUP WITH TERJE JORANGER

Save the date April 30! This year’s Spring Member Meetup will feature Terje Joranger, director of the Norwegian Emigrant Museum. Joranger will trace the history of Norwegian-American scholarship from its origins to the present and highlight new directions in the field.

As a historian focusing on ethnicity and migration, Joranger has centered his research on transnationalism, cultural encounters, and acculturation. Since 2011, he has served as editor of Norwegian-American Essays, published by NAHA-Norge. Joranger also is co-editor of an anthology, Nordic Whiteness, which explores the status and privilege of Nordic immigrants in the United States.

Thursday, April 30
Norway House
913 East Franklin Ave.
Minneapolis
5 p.m. Reception
6 p.m. Program
Members $10
Non-members $15
To register, visit naha.stolaf.edu.
**RECENT HAPPENINGS**

1. Members of NAHA and the public explored St. Paul's Sweede Hollow and Payne Avenue in October with labor and immigration historian Peter Rachleff, professor emeritus of history at Macalester College. Following the tour, the group gathered at the East Side Freedom Library for lunch and discussions about immigrant archives, with presentations from Kosal Sek of the Khmer Legacy Museum and Marlin Heine of the Hmong Archives.

2. More St. Olaf faculty are including archive and special collections material in their teaching. Two first-year writing classes, taught by St. Olaf Professor of English Karen Cherewatuk, viewed author Ole E. Bøveløv’s manuscript for Giants in the Earth. Students enrolled in an advanced Norwegian conversation and composition class, taught by St. Olaf Assistant Professor Jenna Coughlin, compared letters from the period 1880–1920 to learn how the Norwegian language has changed over time.

3. NAHA assisted in research for the American Swedish Institute’s “Time Tested, Tradition Approved” holiday exhibit. The Norwegian Room, decorated by staff members from Skogfjorden language camp and Norway House, reflected Christmas in the year 1945. The exhibit encouraged viewers to “celebrate the freedom of Christmas 1945 with the Norwegian resilience, American support, and handmade trimmings that helped families get through the war.”

4. Visitors on campus for the 2019 St. Olaf Christmas Festival were invited to the NAHA archives to enjoy “Recipes from the Archives: Creating a Scandinavian Buffet!” The exhibit featured 20 vintage cookbooks from the NAHA collection, as well as the personal collection of NAHA board member Debbie Miller. Wooden kitchentware on loan from the St. Olaf College archives was also on display.

5. The Norse-American Centennial images are now digitized and are being added to the Minnesota Digital Library and Minnesota Reflections website. To access them, visit mndigital.org and search using the phrase “Norse-American Centennial.”

**VISIBILITY AND SUPPORT FOR NORDIC-AMERICAN CHURCHES**

Partners for Sacred Places, a nonprofit that builds the capacity of historic congregations to serve their communities, has recently launched a website, Preserving Nordic-American Churches (nordecamericanchurches.org). The site focuses on Norwegian, Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, and Swedish heritage churches and demonstrates the organization’s work to raise the profile of historic sacred places.

The centerpiece of the website is a searchable database of Nordic heritage churches in the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Between 1820 and 1920, more than 1.1 million Nordic immigrants came to the American Midwest, making a significant impact on the cultural landscape of the region.

More than 1,500 Nordic heritage churches were identified during an initial three-year phase of the project. The website, launched in the autumn of 2019, will be updated and the roster of churches will continue to grow during the project’s second phase. This first-of-its-kind inventory demonstrates the variety of sacred places found across the region. It will make it easier for scholars, practitioners, and members of the public to find these churches, visit them, support them, and preserve them.

Among the churches in the inventory, 17 have been chosen to receive grants for restoration and repair projects. The selected churches represent ethnic and geographic diversity. Each reflects Nordic heritage through its architecture and decorative arts, and/or its active sustaining of ethnic traditions. Participating congregations and organizations could apply for funding to help restore or repair a building’s exterior, structural systems, or interior decorative arts. Each grant will be matched by the recipient.

Five Norwegian-American churches were among those selected for grant support:

- **Hardies Creek Lutheran Church (1915), Ittrick, Wisconsin**
- **Nora Unitarian Universalist Church (1884), Hamiska, Minnesota**
- **Old Trondhjem Lutheran Church (1899), Lomdale, Minnesota**
- **Springdale Lutheran Church (1877/1895), Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin**
- **Valley Grove Lutheran Churches (1962/1894), Neenstrand, Minnesota**

NAHA board members Dennis Gimmestad and Kristin Anderson served with the project advisory group. Anderson’s scholarship was a building block for the new “Folk Art & Traditions” tab that was recently added to the website.

“This project brings focus to an important part of the religious and ethnic landscape of the Midwest,” Gimmestad says. He invites those with an interest in Norwegian-American churches to consult Olaf Norlie’s two-volume Norsk Lutherske Menigheter i Amerika 1843–1916 for further information when using the project’s online database. Norlie’s book is digitized and available to read at the website of the Balthrust Digital Library (balthrust.org). To learn more about the work of Partners for Sacred Places, call 215-567-3234 or visit sacredplaces.org.

**EDITOR’S NOTE**

Gracia Grindal wrote our Winter 2019 feature on F. Melius Christian- sen’s arrangement of “Beautiful Savior.” She points out that in editing the story, we might have created confusion for readers.

As our story explains, Christian- sen used the same tune that Danish writer Bernhard Ingemann used for his text “Deilig er Jorden.” Initially, Christiansen used not just the tune but Ingemann’s text as well. When he later transitioned his choral anthem from Danish to English, he kept the tune, but adopted a text unrelated to Ingemann’s, namely “Beautiful Savior.”

Numerous texts have been set to that same tune over centuries. “Beautiful Savior” is a translation of one early text called “Schönster Herr Jesu.” Another English rendering of that text is called “Fairest Lord Jesus.” And here’s where the potential for confusion comes in.

Our story said that Ingemann’s “Deilig er Jorden” is sometimes referred to in English as “Fair- est Lord Jesus.” While that’s true, Grindal says people who use that title are confusing Ingemann’s text with a separate text. By mentioning their usage of the title “Fairest Lord Jesus,” we do not mean to conflate the texts themselves in that way.

The full text of “Deilig er Jorden” has not had a widely known English translation, Grindal says. She shares her own translation of it at naha. stolaf.edu/about/newsletters/2019_winter2/grindal.pdf.

** IMAGES: (4) UW SCANDINAVIAN CLUB 1956, ARTHUR M. VINJE, WISCONSIN STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY; (ALL OTHERS) NAHA **
Broken the Mold

What did politically conserva-
tive Yngvar Nielsen and Marxist Edvard Bull have in common in the early 1900s in Norway? Both of these scholars shared a belief in the importance of local history. They helped make it a field of academic inquiry among their peers.

The Norwegian Institute of Local History, its look at the field’s early influencers, writes that Nielsen was an ethnographer. He brought to his work an emphasis on rural population. Bull put economic lore, arts, and crafts of Norway’s past, and a focus on the affluent and slow-moving brook. But Johnsen’s 1903 history of Hurum Township: a Historical-Topographical Description, a history of the land. dating the use of the byg and as a historical framework. Johnson’s Hurum herred. en historisk-topografisk beskrivelse, Hurum Township: a Historical-Topographical Description, would be a template for many bygdebøker that would follow. Earlier community histories had tended toward a physical description of the land, a handed-down-and-received story of the region’s past, and a focus on the affluent and powerful. They had lacked methodical scholarship. By contrast, Johnsen’s work dug into the concrete details of life for the many rather than the few.

Continued on page 8

Uses Bygdebøker for Family History Research

BY DALE HOLAND

Bygdebøker, the history behind the histories

Following Halvor from Løken Nordre

The story of Halvor Olson from Løken Nordre (child number 5 in the bygdebøker above) shows how helpful a bygdebøker can be in family research. Halvor was born in 1846 and died in 1933, the book tells us. He never owned the farm, which reported in the Hallingdal newsletter, which reported at length on the 50th anniversary celebration of Ambjorn and Halvor Løken.
Bygdebøker, from page 6

He relied on primary sources, such as tax and mortgage records, other archival research, and academic analysis of the data he found. Like Nielsen and Bull, Johnsen was interested in material culture and the social and economic mechanisms at work in the community. So while he revisited a section of the “Local History of Families of Hurum,” he also wrote about Hurum’s farm families, local industry and trades, the schools, and the welfare system.

Another mold-breaking aspect of Johnsen’s Hurum bygdebok was the way he organized his material, dividing it into categories that still show up in most bygdebøker today. There’s a history of the community as a whole, often called a bygde- og slektshistorie, and then the histories of individual farms and the lineage of families who lived there, known as the gods- og slektshistorie.

An Ambitious Vision

Johnsen’s work didn’t stand alone. Other developments also shaped the genre at the start of the 20th century. Under Nielsen’s chairmanship, in 1906 the Norwegian Historical Association designated local history as a field to which it would devote attention and resources. Nielsen chaired a new committee formed for that purpose. Johnsen and Bull would later serve on it, according to the Institute of Local History.

Like Johnsen, Bull wrote influential local histories, including one for Akers in 1918 and another for Kristiania (Oslo) in the 1920s. A collection of Bull’s lectures on the methods of local history was published in 1919—the translated title is An Introduction to Bygg Historical Studies—and it set a high bar for academic standards in the field.

Another member of the 1906 local history committee, and another figure who gave birth to the modern bygdebok, was Lorens Berg. Berg was exceptional because unlike most of the historical association’s members, he wasn’t an academically trained historian. But he was drawn to archival research. The histories from Vestfold that he wrote beginning in 1905 made him widely respected, especially for his careful scholarship focused on the owner- ship and division of land. Berg also went on to write an influential Handbook for Local Historical Research in 1914.

Members of the 1906 committee had a shared vision that local history would inform and complete Norway’s national history. Their ambition was to see bygde and city histories written for every community in Norway. They started with a pilot project centered on Vestfold, in which the most local histories would become like bricks used to build a regional history. Berg would write the bygde volumes, Johnsen would write the city volumes. The plan was for Nielsen to write an overarching history of Vestfold, but he died in 1916 and the larger work never came to be.

A Response to Social Change

What was it about the first decades of the 20th century that set all this work in motion? Two milestone events often cited are the dissolution of Norway’s union with Sweden in 1905 and the centennial of Norway’s constitution in 1914. Both raised feelings of national identity and spurred discussion of what that identity was. In an echo of the period of National Romanticism in the 19th century, many people looked again to rural Norway to find what was særnorsk, distinctively Norwegian.

Alsvik believes another impulse was also at work. He describes the local history movement as a response to the modernization of Norway. The country’s social and economic infrastructure had been changed by industrialization and urbanization in the late 19th and early 20th century. There was a sense that rural culture was being lost and was in need of preservation.

In that light, it may be no coincidence that the closing decades of the 1900s saw a surge of bygdebok production. Local historian Morten Olsen Haugen, in his writing on the bygdebok genre, says that about 2,000 bygdebok volumes were written in Norway in the 1900s. Of those, 62 percent were published in 1970 or later.

The 1970s were the early years of the oil and gas industry, new digital technologies, and new affluence in Norway. They brought another period of significant economic and social change that moved the country away from its rural past.

Is the Farm Still Relevant?

Today, when a community decides to produce a bygdebok, it often hires a professional historian to do the work. It might enlist volunteers to work with that professional and help with research tasks, or it might carry out the whole project with volunteered time and talent.

There is bygdebok-writing guidance available from the Norwegian Institute of Local History, a 64-year- old organization now managed by Norway’s National Library, and from the century-old National Association for Local History, which has about 400 local branches.

Even with that help, challenging questions remain for bygdebok authors about what to include, what to leave out, and how to organize the information. Over time, bygde- boker have become more inclusive. For example, tenants farmers who rented land on a farm, often were left out of early books but are included now. Others who tended to be overlooked—servants, children born outside of marriage, and merchants and others whose jobs were not tied to the land—all are more visible in bygdebok today.

Where should the line be drawn, though, between sharing information that illuminates social and economic conditions and respecting the privacy of a family and its descendant? Norway has privacy laws that local historians can look to, but bygdebok authors still face sensitive decisions. How should health issues be mentioned? Reliance on public financial help? Political affiliations?

More fundamentally, some in Norway wonder, does the bygde- og slektshistorie, with farms as a framework, make sense any more? The farm was foundational to many people’s lives in a bygdebok, but “that changed radically in the latter part of the prior century,” writes historian and bygdebok author Arntfjell Kjelland. Given shifts such as greater housing density in rural areas, an increase in one-person households; fewer marriages; and the fluid nature of dwelling places—a husband’s place convert- ed to a part-time or vacation home, for example—Kjelland is among those who advocate rethinking the farms- og slektshistorie. His preferred terminology: a buromass- og befolkningshistorie, a settlement and population history. The bygdebok is changing in Norway, and so are bygdebok, which will make their future as interesting as their past.

Using Bygdebok, from page 7

“Halvor went to America in 1869. Red Wing, Minnesota. Then [sic] to Goodhue County, Minnesota. He worked at the farm of Kunt Henrikson, in 1876, then bought a farm in Minnesota Township in 1876. Halvor was one of the first with a threshing machine in this area. Halvor sold his farm in 1909. He had 8 children and the news- letter of the Hallinglag. The December 1828 Hallingen has an account of the 50th wedding anniversary celebration for Halvor and Amelberg, including their picture. Record books from the St. Olaf College campus. Find two online indexes of these volumes at worldcat.org (worldcat.org) has a small number of digitized bygdebok and other local historical works from Norway.

WorldCat (worldcat.org), a global online library catalog, can help you find out if any library has the specific bygdebok you need. All of the physical libraries named above, including the NAGA library, are part of WorldCat. As search terms, try place- names from Norway that you’re interested in, either alone or combined with the word “bygdebok” or “historie.” In a few cases, libraries will loan out bygdeboker through the Interlibrary Loan program. A local public librarian can help you place a request.
significant additions to the archives from recent months are listed below. Although we aren’t able to acknowledge all donations here, we do appreciate every donation. We also welcome your help in building the NAHA collection. Materials illustrating all aspects of Norwegian-American history and culture are of interest. NAHA collection guidelines are available on the “Archives” page of our website, naha.stolaf.edu/archives/guidelines.pdf. Please contact the archives at naha-archivist@stolaf.edu with your questions.

DONATED OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 2019

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED MATERIAL


- **An Emigrant’s History from Sognal by Norwegian migration historian Rasmus Sunde.** This 37-page booklet covers the story of Christian Nilsen Flagum, who was born on the Freiland farm in Sognal, January 17, 1859, and died December 13, 1927, in his home near Lake Mills, Iowa. Flagum emigrated with his parents and two brothers in 1867. It is noted that this is a local instructional pamphlet about emigration from Sognal for use in school. Published in 1994, in English and Norwegian. Addition: NAHA 2019/058. Donated by Helen Schuck.

- **First Reserve, autobiography by Susan Jane Severson.** An autobiography written for “children, sisters, cousins of all degrees, close friends, and for anyone interested in learning the history of a second- to fourth-generation Norwegian American growing up in Wisconsin in the 1940s–1960s.” Included are stories of Eva Claire, St. Olaf College, Minneapolis, and her work as a registered nurse at the Fairview and University of Minnesota Hospitals. Addition: NAHA 2019/056. Donated by Susan J. Severson, associate member.

- **The Promise Fulfilled: A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today by Susan Jane Severson.** An autobiography written for “children, sisters, cousins of all degrees, close friends, and for anyone interested in learning the history of a second- to fourth-generation Norwegian American growing up in Wisconsin in the 1940s–1960s.” Included are stories of Eva Claire, St. Olaf College, Minneapolis, and her work as a registered nurse at the Fairview and University of Minnesota Hospitals. Addition: NAHA 2019/056. Donated by Susan J. Severson, associate member.

- **Hans Allen family papers, circa 1910.** Confirmation certificate, Lutheran Ladies Seminary pamplilet, and photographs of the Allen family. A native of Decorah, Iowa, Hans Allen attended both common school and Luther College in Decorah. He supplemented his training at Concordia College in St. Louis, Missouri, after which he was ordained to the ministry in the fall of 1886. Allen was president of the Lutheran Ladies Seminary in Red Wing, Minnesota, starting in 1894 and was the seminary’s chair of Norwegian literature, and Bible and church history. Addition: NAHA 2019/057. Donated by Dwight Edwards Palas.

- **Arne M. Bjornadal journal, 1940.** The journal of Arne Bjornadal, who was involved in resistance activities following the German invasion of Norway on April 9, 1940. The journal documents his experiences in Norway between April 9 and April 20 that year. Also included is a small booklet, My Early Years: From School Days to War Time, which reflects on his early years in Norway, the invasion of Norway, becoming a “citizen arrested,” and being sent to Ebreichsdorf sanatorium near the Austria-Hungary border. Transcription and translation of journal provided. Addition: NAHA 2019/055. Donated by Lee Bjornadal.


- **Theodore Jorgenson papers, circa 1910–1960.** Correspondence between Meyer Batalden, his sister Bertha, and his father, Christian, while he was at Breck College, in Wilder, Minnesota. Secretarial records regarding the Highwater Lutheran Church in Cottonwood County, Minnesota, circa 1899, including council minutes, a list of members, and letters from the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America regarding synod business. Photographs of the Batalden family and Breck College. Addition: NAHA 2019/060. Donated by Lois Batalden.

ADOPT-A-CASSETTE UPDATE

At press time, we had reached 70 percent of our fundraising goal to digitize the oral interviews conducted for Odd Lovoll’s book, The Promise Fulfilled: A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today. That means at least 31 of the 44 cassettes can be digitized. A special thank you goes to NAHA members who have donated to this project. To participate, donate online and add “adopt-a-cassette” to the comments field, or send a check with the project designated on the memo line.
This photo is a recent acquisition added to the papers of historian Odd Lovoll from his work on his book *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago Before 1930* (published by NAHA in 1988). In the book, Lovoll identifies the image as the interior of the A. M. Hanson Meat Market on Halsted Street. He continues: “Adolph Martin Hanson, who had come to Chicago from Farsund, Norway, in 1888, at the age of 17, moved his meat market from Halsted Street to California Avenue in 1902. He thus moved with the Norwegian community, and made Norwegian meat products to satisfy its needs.”