

# Norwegian-American Historical Association

Vol 143

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From the NAHA Office to Association Members

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## NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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## From the President

The year 2011 has been good to your Norwegian-American Historical Association. One of the true highlights of the year for the Association, and for me personally, was the visit of Their Majesties King Harald V and Queen Sonja to St. Olaf College on October 14.

With support from our Board of Directors and the Editorial Council, our 2011 publication *Norwegian-American Studies, Volume 36* was issued this fall, dedicated to His Majesty King Harald V and Her Majesty Queen Sonja on the occasion of their visit to St. Olaf College. I was honored to officially present the volume to Their Majesties during a luncheon at the college.

Following the luncheon, Their Majesties attended convocation at Boe Memorial Chapel. All NAHA members present must have felt pride for our mutual efforts over the years as we heard King Harald's remarks:

*"A community's voice is heard in the stories it tells and the documents it leaves behind. The Norwegian American Historical Association, housed here at the*

*College, has done a remarkable job of collecting, organizing, and displaying information about the lives and hardships of the Norwegian immigrants. At the same time as showing us the past, the Norwegian American Historical Association also sheds light on our present. Strong connections continue to bind America and Norway together. Student exchange, love stories, letters and visits across the Atlantic still contributes to the development of our strong ties. I wish you all the best in preserving these values."*

Your officers and Board pledge to continue to live up to the recognition by His Majesty. We will continue to archive stories and documents that tell the rich history of Norwegian Americans, and publish scholarly works to interpret the importance of that history.

In 2012, we are planning to publish another volume for our members. We will also launch a fundraising campaign to make necessary temperature and air control improvements in our archives.

Thank you for your support!

# Knud Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*/

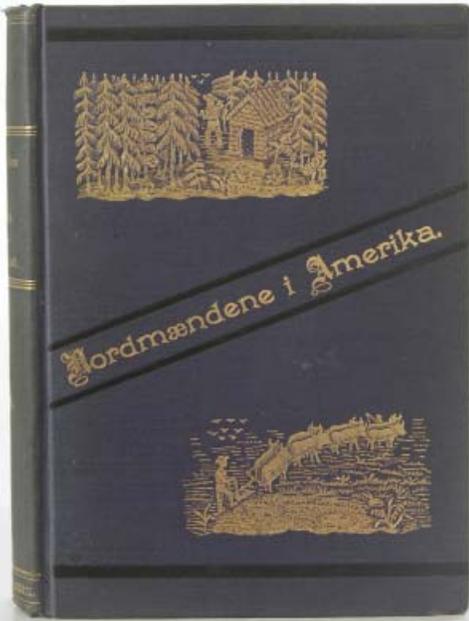


Photo of the original publication, *Nordmændene i Amerika*.

The new publication will replicate the appearance of the 1888 original with the addition of the English translation alongside the original text.

According to the Chicago newspaper *Skandinaven's* 1888 observation, "Knud Langeland's life and activities must be considered among the most meaningful of immigrated Norwegians." He was born October 27, 1813, in the municipality of Samnanger east of the city of Bergen as the youngest of nine siblings on a small farm where the main livelihood was raising cattle. His father died when he was only thirteen years old and the farm was sold a few years later and he was left to "seek his own fortune"; as a member of the working classes he suffered the social discrimination and injustice of his day. His own experience and his strong faith in human equality influenced greatly his social and political activities throughout his life. Langeland pursued education through self study and private instruction and found employment as a country itinerant teacher close to his home community and as sexton in the local congregation. Before immigrating to America in 1843, he spent six months in England learning the English language, and thus arrived with skills that greatly eased his adjustment to the new society.

In America, Langeland settled on a farm in Racine County, Wisconsin. He described America as "the Land of Newspapers," and he himself gained great prominence in Norwegian-American journalism. In the fall of 1849 he purchased the pioneer newspaper *Nordlyset*, launched in Muskego in 1847, and moved it to

Racine. The name was later altered to *Democraten* and from June 1851 it was published in Inmansville until it ceased publication in October. It saw itself as the Norwegian standard-bearer of the Democratic Party in Wisconsin; analogous to *Nordlyset* it was strongly antislavery and advocated the Free Soil policy of free public lands. Journalism led to politics, and in 1860 Langeland served in the Wisconsin legislature.

His editorship of *Skandinaven* from its establishment in 1866 nearly continuously until 1881 gained him his greatest fame. *Skandinaven* became an organ for the ordinary person and enjoyed a powerful position among Norwegian Americans, for a time enjoying the position as the largest Norwegian-language newspaper, not only in America, but in the entire world. *Skandinaven* was consistently Republican, and political candidates eagerly sought the newspaper's support. Langeland urged Scandinavian unity at the polls to assure proportionate share of public offices, accusing the Republican Party of not doing its duty toward the Scandinavians, who, as he wrote, joined the party because it was founded on the eternal truth of equality before the law for all citizens of the land without regard to religion, place of birth, or color of skin.

*Skandinaven* became low-church and sympathetic to the lay movement; followers of the

## Norwegians in America by Odd S. Lovoll

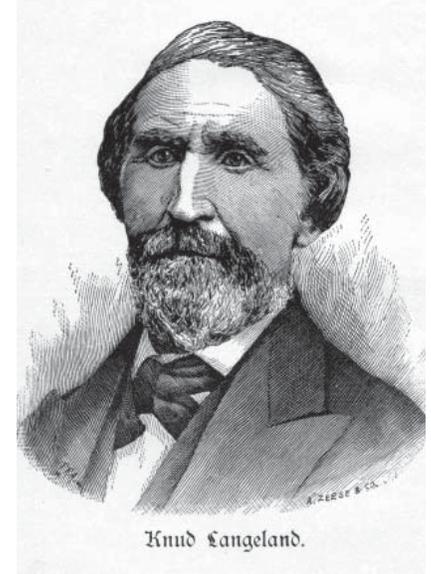
Norwegian lay Lutheran religious leader Hans Nielsen Hauge regarded the newspaper as their organ. Langeland's editorial policy expressed an anticlerical position toward the high-church Norwegian Synod. As the long-time editor of *Decorah-Posten* Johannes Wist writes, "Langeland's ingrained ill-will toward Norwegian authority figures made him give special attention to Norwegian theologians in this country, who in his eyes represented the same mindset as the government officials in [his birthplace] Samnanger." His defense of the American public school system against the Norwegian Synod pastors, who saw it as an inherent threat to Lutheranism and the Norwegian language, caused a controversy well documented in the newspaper's columns. Langeland editorially challenged the Synod clergy; he emphasized that the common school encouraged democracy, indirectly taught religious tolerance, and promoted patriotism and love of freedom. His defense of the common school led to the distinction of having one of Chicago's elementary schools named after him.

Knud Langeland died February 8, 1888, in his home in Milwaukee, surrounded by his family, his wife Anna, née Hatlestad, whom he married in 1849, and their seven children. That very year his memories from life in Norway and in America were published as *Nordmændene i Amerika* or

*Norwegians in America*, stating in the introduction the following: "It is not the intention to deliver any perfect historical work, but on the other hand to bring the timber and the rocks that the simple worker brings to the experienced builder, so that from this he can erect that historical building." Langeland is here far too modest, as was his wont in life. It is a work with insight and reflection, and demonstrates Langeland's independence of thought and interpretation. He takes the reader on an historical journey that surely both the professional keepers of the past and the interested readers will peruse with great interest and benefit. The book is divided into two parts. The first half treats immigration and the immigrant experience as Langeland saw and experienced it; the second half is autobiographical. In total Langeland paints a striking social and political portrait of the time in which he lived.

A bilingual edition of the book, retaining the Norwegian text transcribed in Latin letters, and an English translation, will be published by Astri My Astri Publishing in February 2012. Odd-Steinar Raneng, a Norwegian immigrant to Australia, offers an excellent translation into English of nineteenth-century Dano-Norwegian. I am grateful to Deb Nelson Gourley of Astri My Astri Publishing for the opportunity to cooperate in the preparation of the manuscript and to contribute

a foreword. It was my intention as NAHA's editor to make Langeland's book in translation a NAHA publication and worked together with Clarence A. Clausen (May 30, 1896 – May 10, 1991) - friend, long-time professor at St. Olaf College and NAHA supporter - to that end. We were unfortunately not able to complete the project. *Norwegians in America/Nordmændene i Amerika* will be dedicated to Clausen's memory in gratitude for his support and assistance during my tenure as the Association's editor.



### How to order the book:

Call - send a check - or order from the website:

Astri My Astri Publishing

Deb Nelson Gourley

602 3rd Ave SW, Waukon, IA 52172

Phone: 563-568-6229

\$24.95 includes FREE shipping in the USA.

[gourleydeb@gmail.com](mailto:gourleydeb@gmail.com)

<http://www.astrimyastri.com>

# En Jul i Coon Valley

*This is an excerpt from an article that first appeared in "Jul i Vesterheimen" in 1946.*

*The translation was provided by Pastor L.A. Mathre in 1965.*

*The translation is part of the John N. Midtlien collection at the Norwegian-American Historical Association.*

*J. N. Midtlien (1877-1966) was a Norwegian born Lutheran clergyman.*

It was Christmas of 1903, forty three years ago. I was at the time a student at St. Olaf College and was home for Christmas in my dear Coon Valley community. At the same time Olaus Sövde was also on a Christmas visit in the settlement. He was a student at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul. Later he became Pastor Roalkvam's successor in Coon Valley. Both of us were invited to dinner at the parsonage the day after Christmas. Moreover, we had a standing invitation which I made use of as often as convenient when I was home. It was brilliant winter weather, with snow-covered winter roads, when we arrived at the parsonage, but as the old proverb says: "No one knows the day before the sun goes down."

It so happened that toward the evening a blustering snowstorm broke loose, with the result that we had to remain over night, for which we received a hearty invitation from the pastor's wife. By remaining we had an extended opportunity to participate in the Christmas celebration in the parsonage. It is unnecessary to say that in this house it was not Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. Christmas was Christmas in Norwegian style at Roalkvams'; it stretched over twelve days; including New Years and lasting until Epiphany. The snowstorm had abated towards the morning of the third day of Christmas. However, the snow lay so deep and was so packed that

the roads were entirely impassable. The pastor should have Christmas servitudes that day in an outlying church, but even he who was not easily frightened by bad weather or bad roads - had to stay home that day.

It was always festive in the parsonage; for the parsonage folks were of the kind who carried all trials to themselves and always showed visitors a friendly and a calm face. But things were most festive at Christmas. Then the whole house was decorated for the holidays. Then the fragrant aroma of coffee and all sorts of baking were at their best in the kitchen, and the dining room. It seems as though I can still sense the delightful cardamom fragrance in my nostrils. And then, more than otherwise, it was as if the sweet fragrance of Christ streamed out from Christian hearts.

There were always lots of folks there at Christmas time. In addition to the family itself, visiting relatives and friends came. Others besides Olaus Sövde and I had discovered that at the parsonage it was good to celebrate Christmas. This Christmas was no exception. There were certainly no lack of Christmas guests.

The assembled group was as follows: The daughter Anna, who was a music student at St. Olaf College naturally wished to be home for Christmas. With her had come

# gamle prestegård by J. N. Midtlien

another St. Olaf student, Henrik Tønning, a younger brother of the Pastor's wife. Then there were no less than three of her sisters: Marie, Tomah and Katy and her three small boys - Thomas, Einar and Marcus. Also, the Roalkvams had an adopted daughter, Dora. The last was Mrs. Roalkvam's nephew, who did the chores. There was a farm in connection with the parsonage, and the herd of cattle was not so small.

Yes, indeed, a Christmas mood was over the entire place - over yard and stall and barn; but especially within the house itself. There was the fragrance of pine needles and there were Christmas lights in the parlor, where the Christmas tree stood. On the library table in the pastor's study, next to the living room, lay a stack of beautifully illustrated Christmas booklets. Most of these, if not all of them, were from Norway, for this was before the publishing house manager Sundheim, had sent out the very first number of "Jul i Vesterheimen", and almost a generation before Haugan's "Christmas".

In the big dining room there was an enormously long Christmas table constantly set, with many kinds of Christmas decorations on it. This in itself gave an incomparable feeling of Christmas through the holiday season.

The guests had placed themselves at the breakfast table the morning

of the third day of Christmas; but the host had not yet made his appearance. "O, there he comes dressed in a warm robe, in from the study with the devotional book in his hand." Roalkvam always had morning devotions. As always at the parsonage table, the going conversation was easy and natural - not didactic, yet truly instructive. The guests in the place arose from the table with a feeling, not only of being well satisfied with delicious and nourishing food but with a definite sense of having received something for the soul and spirit.

The day passed quickly. All too quickly, so thought all of us who were guests. Evening came as a climax. After supper the pastor sat down under a cozy reading lamp and read aloud for us. It was a real joy to hear Pastor Roalkvam read. Then Anna went to the piano and the entire company gathered around her to sing. Self-evidently it was mostly Christmas songs that were sung. The thoroughly cozy evening closed with the serving of nuts and cakes. I have never been present at any entertainment - be it the finest concert - which I have enjoyed as much as that evening at Christmas-tide in Coon Valley parsonage.

The next morning we two students were awakened by a light knock at the door, which was at once opened, and there he stood, with a large armful of firewood - the pastor himself! He wished us a good morning and

a good continuation of Christmas. In spite of our protest he himself fired up the stove, and remained standing a while to talk while the wood began to crackle and there was a rumble in the stove pipe. Quite naturally we lay in bed till the room became good and warm. Young people like to stretch a bit in bed early in the morning.

We were just talking together that it was high time to get up, when the door, after a light knock, was again opened. There, believe it or not, the pastor stood again - this time with a large coffee tray neatly balanced on one hand. "Coffee in the bed! Now, now Pastor Roalkvam, this goes beyond all bounds! You spoil us completely." "It is Christmas only once a year" - He smiled quietly in his whiskers; "At any rate it doesn't happen often that you get coffee in bed in your student quarters - so you will not so easily be spoiled this once!" I tell you, the steaming coffee and Mrs. Roalkvam's Christmas bread, heavily buttered, tasted great.

# O.I. Hertsgaard's Christmas

*O.I. Hertsgaard used the following text for a speech given in 1975 to the 101 Club at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.*

*A graduate of St. Olaf College in 1908, Hertsgaard became a director of music at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, 1909-1913, after which he embarked on a long career as a representative for the Mutual Trust Insurance Company. He served many terms on the boards of Fairview Hospital and St. Olaf College and held executive positions in a great many organizations. In 1939 he organized a Folk Festival, one of the events in honor of the visit of Crown Prince Olav and Crown Princess Martha of Norway. Because of his long association with Hallinglaget and his frequent visits to Norway, he was popularly known as "Hallingkongen." He was President of Bygdelagenes Faellesraadet for twelve years, in which connection he promoted the publication of "A Folk Epic, The Bygdelag in America," 1975. He received the St. Olav Medal in 1940 and the Knight's Cross, First Class, of the Royal Order of St. Olav, in 1947, from King Haakon of Norway.*

No doubt the Christmas activities in the Kindred, North Dakota community were typical of all other communities where Norwegian immigrants were a majority.

Preparing for Christmas started about three weeks before Christmas Day. Butchering "the fatted calf" and three or four pigs was the job of the men folks. The women had to do all the baking and cooking. Preparing Christmas hospitality food assumed great importance, for the Christmas Season lasted for 13 days had run their course. The usual fare was lefse, lutefisk and spare ribs. Liquid refreshments vary, depending on individual cases. The "powerful" kind of drink called "pons" was made by pouring alcohol in boiling water and adding a bit of cinnamon for flavor. Home brew was a common Christmas drink, made of barley, malt and hops. During the Christmas Season the "church people", as they were called, might unbend to the extent of taking a wee bit of a sip of homemade wine made from the juice of wild grapes and choke cherries. There was keen competition among the women, for each one liked to be known as "the champion." Good manners forbade taking more than one fattigman, krumkake or sandbakkels, and when the hostess offered a second helping it got to be a psychological battle as to how far to go in saying "No, thank you", for there was the danger that the hostess would then unburden herself with a retort like,

"Oh, you don't like my cooking." Pure hypocrisy of course and all knew it.

On the prairies of North Dakota there were no evergreen trees. We had made candles on the table to create a Christmassy spirit. Joining hands, we would circle around the table, singing "Glade Jule and her komme dine arme smaa," all in Norwegian of course. Father or mother would read the Christmas gospel after which the presents were handed to the children. The grownups didn't get anything. The presents for us children were always home knitted socks or mittens, sometimes a small pocket knife. Happy and thankful, we children would then say our prayers, coached and prompted by mother, and then off to bed upstairs in a cold room, dreaming about the next day when we piled into bob sleigh headed for Christmas Day services in town, for in the church we knew there would be a big evergreen tree all lit with dozens of candles. The fire hazard involved made it necessary to have a "chief" ready with pails of water to put out a fire should it flare into a blaze. The "tree program" was recitations and songs, the performers being chosen from the "gifted-talented" children, although I recall the chosen ones would likely be a child of the minister or the banker in town. If there was any jealousy it would likely be among fond mothers who knew their own child should have been chosen.

# Reminiscences

The young ones had only one interest, namely to get at the job of distributing the presents. Just like present day children enjoy “recess” more than any other activity of the school program.

As we enter the church for Christmas Day services, we behold a solid phalanx of women, all in long black dresses reaching over the black buttoned shoes, all of them seated on the left side of the center aisle, while on the right sat all the men folks. Not a single English word was heard, not from the minister nor anyone else. Everything was all Norsk – flavored in various dialects, mostly Halling, that being the great majority there. Soon after the minister had started his sermon the congregation was asked to rise and sing the Norwegian hymn well known to us as “To us is born a blessed child.” A small, hand-pumped reed organ tried, helplessly and hopelessly to get the congregation to pick up the tempo a bit but soon had to fall in line with the long drawn, draggy kind of singing the congregation had as its usual pace. Eight or ten stanzas were a trying ordeal to sit through. This is a vivid memory for me for at the age of twelve, I was asked to play the organ. My cousin and I, (both born on the same day) alternated as organist – organ pumper. This was the first job I ever had – for pay – the pay being the munificent amount of ten dollars per year. But there was a string tied to it, namely the subtle suggestion that the \$10 should be

used to pay for some additional lessons – that in spite of the fact I had already then had a total of 52 lessons at an expense of 50¢ per lesson.

One important part of Christmas Day services was the offering. That was an annual gift to the minister. We all marched single file around the alter where we placed our 25¢ or 50¢ coins, the minister standing alongside the offering plate, to smile and greet the givers, but to me it seemed as if his glance would flit over to see what size of coin each one gave. There was also another small plate on a table where we were to add a widow’s mite to the “klokker”. He was the man who was to intone an Amen at prescribed moments. It would happen that once in a while the “klokker” did not quite time his Amens correctly. This would evince a smile from a few knowing ones in the church and a rather serious reprimanding look from the minister. Among those who offered there was a non-coin giver. He was the richest farmer in the neighborhood. When he approached the offering plate he had a one dollar bill that he took by the end and swung it in a high semi-circle so everyone could see that he was a paper money giver. We did not have a choir, nor was there an organ offertory. Instead, the remnant of the congregation that was not on the march to or from the alter was supposed to keep singing as many stanzas of the total of 22 listed as the

offering hymn.

At the end of the two-hour long services, there was always a sociability session outside of the church. Groups would huddle; the men would chat about the weather, livestock, prices etc. While the women would review the latest neighborhood gossip, there being no telephones for that purpose those days. At no other time of the year did sociability take over like Christmas. It might border on the hilarious when big and small groups would set out on what was called “Julebukk” parties. Both men and women would dress up in all sorts of disguises, like a bunch of buffoons. They would pile into bobsleds and drive from one farm to another to do their stunts of entertaining, dancing and joking and trying to keep everyone from guessing “who’s who”. Some kind of treats were expected at each place, as a slight sign of appreciation. In a more serious and dignified way there was family-friendly intimacy at all such gatherings, impossible to describe. Some of my fondest memories of my early Christmas experiences in rural North Dakota were those events.

# From the Front Desk by Jackie Henry

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## **In this Issue**

In celebration of the holiday season, I've delved into the NAHA Archives for a pair of Christmas stories from our collection. Though we have a number of stories from which to choose, these two were especially delightful and I hope you enjoy them as much as I do. If you are interested in more stories, you can search the archives through Leif (<http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/archivesdata/leif/>). Just type in "Christmas" and you'll find a number of resources, including stories and poetry. If you find something of interest, just send me an email or letter and I'll make arrangements to get a copy to you.

I also want to extend a special thank-you to Odd Lovoll for sharing his introduction to Knud Langeland, author of *Nordmændene i Amerika*. The new edition will be a unique reproduction and translation of the original 1888 edition with the translated copy appearing side by side with the original Norwegian copy. Thanks too, to Deb Nelson Gourley of Astri, My Astri Publishing for providing the images that accompany the article

## **A Look at the Year Ahead**

We are already planning our 2012 calendar, with events and publications for the New Year. In late fall, we'll hold our 2012 biennial members meeting, and a planning committee has formed to develop the day's events. Coinciding with that event will be the release of our

2012 publication, the first in a series of three editions of America letters. In addition, I have several other potential programs for members in the works, which we will publicize as details firm up.

## **Membership Updates**

For the first time in many years, our membership numbers have remained stable in 2012. I want to thank all our members for their renewals and donations given in 2011, and offer a special thanks to those who encouraged others to join and/or shared a gift membership with a loved one. More than two thirds of our operating budget, including funds for publications, comes from memberships and gifts. We literally could not do what we do with your financial support, and we are so grateful to you for your contributions.

# The Editor's Corner by Todd Nichol

Sometimes historians are allowed to read other people's letters. Living correspondents may give you permission to do so, and if correspondence has been left among the effects of a family without restriction, it is altogether appropriate to read such letters and think of them as evidence for the development of the history of an individual, a family, a community, an institution, or group of any sort. Letters in public archival collections may be another source for an historical story in which you are interested.

A good way to acquaint yourself with what can be learned from letters would be to read – or read again – some of our previous publications. Here I mention just a few. The pioneering works of our first editor, Theodore C. Blegen, including *Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860* and *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition* are based in considerable part on letters, many of which Blegen himself gathered in Norway and the United States. A touching and revealing collection of letters is the correspondence of Gro Svendsen published under the title *Frontier Mother*. These letters help us see into the life of young woman who emigrated from Hallingdal and settled in the Midwest in the nineteenth century. Still another collection of letters brings together correspondents from various

periods and places. This is Solveig Zempel's, *In Their Own Words*. Don't overlook her very good introduction, which is in part about how to read letters.

Finally, join me anticipating with great pleasure the publication of three volumes of immigrant letters, scheduled for 2012 to 2016. These volumes will be based on a critical edition of immigrant letters that is now nearly complete in several volumes published in Norwegian in Norway. Orm Øverland will edit and publish the English version of these letters as he has the Norwegian edition.

In the meantime, look around at home and inquire as to what letters may be floating around in the family circle. There may be interesting things waiting to be discovered and considered.

Note: The publications mentioned in this article are out of print but available from the St. Olaf College Library or the Library of Congress through interlibrary loan. Check with your local library for details.

# New Additions to the Archives

by Gary DeKrey, Archivist

The Archives continue to benefit from the generosity of members and friends who have made important donations. Although we aren't able to acknowledge all donations here, we do appreciate every donation, large and small. We welcome additional donations of Norwegian-American letters, diaries, photographs, family histories, and community and congregational materials. Families can be sure that their donations will remain open for family consultation in the NAHA archives. They can also be certain that family treasures will not be discarded in a hasty move or by future generations who may have lost touch with their Norwegian-American heritage. If you have old photographs of Norwegian-American family members that you can no longer identify, why not donate them? NAHA staff, visitors, or members may eventually be able to shed light on such mystery photo subjects.

Recent additions to the manuscripts collection include:

**Autograph book belonging to Gilbert Larson, Augustana College, Canton, South Dakota, 1894-1899.** Includes note by fellow student, O. E. Rølvaag. Added to Collection P0482: Augustana College Papers. Donated by Joy Peterson, Northfield, MN.

**Divers, Dorothy. "Biography of**

**Ingeborg Stolee."** (Typescript, 11 pages). Added to Collection P1702: Stolee Family Papers. Donated by Marilyn Stolee, Edina, MN.

We have also recently received the following Norwegian-American family histories, memoirs, and organizational histories:

**Telemark to America Volume III: Settlements, Biographies, and Telemark Lore (Telelaget of America, 2011).** Added to Collection P0465: Bygdelagene Papers/Telelaget. Donated by Alice Kirn.

**Heimerle, Steve. Long Distance Reflections: Musings on a Few Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles & Cousins, 1510-1999 (2011).** Added to Collection P0539: Family Histories and Genealogies. Surnames: Schjelderup, Tønder, Darre, Hansen, Hesler, Løchen, Heinecke, Gullicksen, Brautigam, and Drews. Donated by author.

**The Fox Lake [Rice County] Album, edited by Kenneth Hokeness (2009).** Added to Collection P0539: Family Histories and Genealogies. Book focuses on Astri Engebretsdatter and son Knut Asleson Knutson. Includes CD: "Ancestors of Martin Hokeness, 30 Generations (850 A.D. to 1951)," typescript. Donated by Martin Hokeness.

**Crone-Aamot, Olav Richard. The Marvelous Norwegian Paperclip.** Added to Collection P0565: Norway

in World War II papers. Chronicles author's experiences as a member of the Norwegian Resistance Force MILORG. Donated by author.

**Solomonson, Allan G. Gilma Solomonson: The Story of an Iowa Farm Wife; and My Student Years at Luther College 1956-1960.** Added to Collection P0539: Family Histories and Genealogies. Donated by author.

**Aurdalskyrkja fra Lund sokn til Valdres prosti (Aurdal Menighetsråd, 1987); Kyrkja Ved Fjorden (Utgitt av Svenes soknerad, 1985); Church Life in North Aurdal Valdres Valley.** Added to Collection P1136: Boral R. Biorn Papers. Translation by Boral R. Biorn. Donated by Marie Biorn Sathrum.

**Huseby, N. Dean. Haakinson Family History.** Includes a series of articles written by donor (family papers all in electronic format). Added to Collection P0539: Family Histories and Genealogies. Donated by author.

# Collection Spotlight:

## Norwegians in the Attic

by Jeff Sauve, Assistant Archivist

What's in your attic? In the case of a Northfield, Minn., residence the attic contained a collection of Norwegian family letters and photographs belonging to the original house owners, Elling and Anna Trolsen Tollefsrud, as well as the family papers of their son-in-law, Carl Hanson.

Current residence owner, Jonathan Hill, a retired St. Olaf College Professor of English, purchased the house decades ago from Mrs. Carl (Beatha) Hanson. Prof. Hill understood the importance of preserving the collection and donated the contents to NAHA in October 2010.

Records indicate that Elling Tollefsrud, son of Erik E. and Berit Tollefsrud, emigrated from Norway in May, 1867, at the age of 10. He first lived in Orfordville, Wis., later settling in Northwood, Iowa. On March 9, 1889, he married Anna, who was born in Flaa, Hallingdal, in 1867 and immigrated to the US at age 19.

The couple moved to Blooming Prairie in 1902. In the summer of 1916 the family moved to Northfield. Elling died in 1925 and Anna in 1949. She was survived by

three children Mrs. C. M. Hansen (Beatha) and Mrs. C. H. Johnson (Emily) both of San Antonio, Texas; and Mervin Tollefsrud, Northfield, and three grandchildren, Erling and Charles Hansen and Enid Ann Johnson, all of San Antonio.

The collection itself comprises 35 mostly unidentified tintype and carte-de-visite photographs taken in the 1860s and 1870s. One particular image of note is a rare carte-de-visite of a famous actress and dancer, Marie Majilton. She performed with her brothers, Frank and Charles (known as the Marie Majilton Trio) in venues mainly on the East Coast.

For those interested in photography studios, the following are represented: John H. Olseon, Minneapolis; A.W. Adams, Decorah, Iowa, P.A. Gausemel, Kenyon, Minn.; and L. Peavey, Faribault, Minn. Images marked "Northwood, Iowa" and "Mason City, Iowa" are also part of the collection.

The manuscripts include the Emmanuel Hanson family papers, Fergus Falls, Minn. (1896-1931); World War I letters of Carl Hanson (1918); and letters from Carl Hanson's niece, Clara Guttormonson Harmon (1920-1931).



*The Archives continue to benefit from the generosity of members and friends who have made important donations.*

*We welcome additional donations of Norwegian-American letters, diaries, photographs, family histories, and community and congregational materials.*



*Marie Mjilton  
Carte-de-visite*



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Happy Holidays  
from the  
Norwegian-  
American  
Historical  
Association

Photo: Perry Norsk  
Evangelical Lutheran  
Church.  
Mt. Horeb, WI  
ca. 1906  
Collected congregational  
papers.