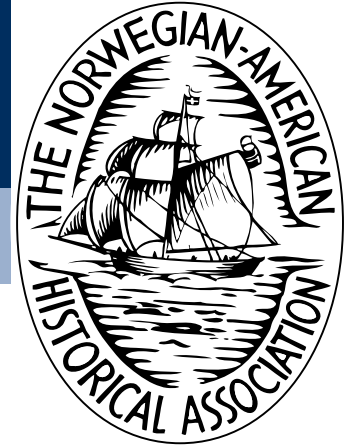


Norwegian-American Historical Association

Vol 145

Summer 2012



A Newsletter From the NAHA Office
to Association Members

From the Editor

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From America to Norway Norwegian-American Immigrant Letters, 1834-1914

If you think of history as a recital of facts in a given order, you may want to think again. Histories are more like stories than recital of fact. Historians spend their time trying to make a story out of past realities. They look for beginnings and endings, for paragraphs and chapters, for themes and even meanings. When a history is well done, it is instructive but it remains only constructive, something made up out of all data the historian is able to or cares to use. It never quite captures the life of the past. Reality, one accomplished historian used to like to remind his students, was not made for scholarship's sake.

The next book to be published by NAHA, the first in a series of volumes of immigrant correspondence from America to Norway, illustrates this aspect of history. Letters are also constructed. They have writers and recipients, all situated variously. Letters have beginnings and endings. They have purposes. Some things are included and some are left out. Letters are more or less candid and truthful as the case may be. Letters also require, as Orm Øverland points out in his fine introduction to this volume, careful reading. Still, letters are often qualitatively different from most of the other sources historians use in constructing their narratives and presenting interpretations. They differ from most of these sources because they give us the voice of the ordinary individual. Especially from about 1870 forward, most letters are private and confidential, usually from one writer and to one, or just a few recipients.

The opportunity to hear the voice of the individual is an important reason to read letters like those gathered here, but there are other reasons to read letters like these. Various readers will find a wealth of information on kinfolk, places, agriculture, church life, politics, clothing, food, language, and more. And there is at least one more reason for many to read this correspondence. These letters are quite simply interesting and engaging. You can pick them up and put them down, read them in small pieces or take a large slice at once. They are good reading.

The gathering, editing, translating, and publishing of letters has been a high priority for the Norwegian-American Historical Association since its founding. The present volume and the two volumes and cumulative indices projected to follow it continue a long tradition. While together they will become a landmark in the history of the association, we may hope that they are not the final volumes of correspondence to be published. Much more remains to be done with the correspondence of individuals in various situations.

For now, however, welcome to some fascinating reading.

Todd Nichol
Editor

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A New Way to Experience Norwegian



*Bonde fra Vossevangen
by Adolph Tidemand
Used with permission*

Share the stories of your family's immigration with other immigrant families and with researchers interested in the history of Norwegian immigration.

One of the big challenges for anyone wanting to engage with those interested in the great drama of emigration from Norway to North America is that they are spread over such huge distances! The community includes local historians throughout Norway and the families of those who left, as well as descendants and family history enthusiasts scattered across the USA and Canada from coast to coast. This is not even to mention historians and story-tellers in all those ports through which the emigrants / immigrants passed. How do we unite all these people, this extended family of those touched by the departure of hundreds of thousands from Gamle Norge?

At the University of Sheffield (UK) a new research project has recently been launched. The title of the project is "Ola Nordmann

Goes West" and its aim is to create the virtual world of a Norwegian peasant travelling from Norway to America in the early 1880s. Any reader who is familiar with Second Life or other 3D virtual-world interfaces will be familiar with this sort of thing. 'Ola' starts the journey on a farm near Voss in Western Norway and travels on foot and by boat down to the coast at Bergen (the Bergen—Voss railway hasn't yet been built...). Visitors to the world can join him on the farm as the journey begins and then again when he arrives at Bergen. From there he travels, like the majority of emigrants towards the end of the nineteenth century, over the North Sea to the port of Hull on the East coast of England and continues his journey by train across the North of England (bypassing Sheffield) to Liverpool, where he sets off on the



*Voss Farm
Photo by Andrew Linn, used with permission*

Immigration by Andrew Linn

final stage of his journey to New York City.

This is more than just a bit of digital fun, however. The researchers behind the project want to know if this sort of technology can help historians collect and interpret information which would otherwise be hard to access. At each point in the virtual journey there will be a traditional Norwegian mailbox. Visitors to the world can click on these in order to share their story. If the virtual world is all wrong, you can tell the community. If you have some neat stories to share you can tell the community and also search each others' stories. If you have pictures or audio clips, you can upload these too. The Sheffield team are trying to find out how much information and what sort of information it is possible to collect by bringing a community together through an online world.

Although the star of this particular show, the fictitious (though historically informed) Ola, is from Voss and travels a particular route in a particular decade, the "Ola Nordmann Goes West" team would like to hear from anyone who has anything to tell them about the migration from any part of Norway at any stage to anywhere in the USA or indeed in the world. Our Ola is a case study designed to get you talking about the journey from Norway as a whole but his story is by no means the full story.

The virtual world goes live in

September 2012. To encourage people to keep coming back and see it grow, the journey won't be complete at the start. The Sheffield team will respond to your contributions in order to develop it and change it and improve it over the following 8 months. The website is already set up, and if you are not interested in all the digital worlds stuff, you can share your contributions by filling in a simple form on the website or even by writing an old-fashioned letter to the project director, Professor Andrew Linn. Please do visit the web pages, which can be found at www.olanordmann.co.uk. Andrew and the team would love to know your views and your suggestions.

If the world of Ola Nordmann is going to be really useful as well as interesting and entertaining, it needs you to share in it. The Sheffield creators are setting things up, but, although they are as eager as anyone to see what happens, the world is really for those with the stories to tell, and it is hoped that this will be a fun way of helping the Norwegian-American community in its work.

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Post WWII Oral History

“Oral histories give individuals an opportunity to help create our understanding of the past, and they are an invaluable aid to those studying the experiences of recent immigrants.”

- Gary DeKrey,
NAHA Archivist

In August, the Norwegian-American Historical Association and the Sons of Norway introduced a collaborative effort to collect oral histories from Norwegian immigrants who moved to the U.S. or Canada after World War II.

The Rationale

Since 1925 the Norwegian American Historical Association has collected the materials related to the immigration of Norwegians to the United States and Canada. In the early years of the association, the materials collected were largely based on the first 100 years of immigration history. These were the documents and manuscripts most at risk of loss due to age, deterioration and inability of second or third generation descendents to recognize the historical significance of the materials. As a result, the bulk of our archived materials deal with the first 100 years of Norwegian-American migration. However immigration did not stop after 1925. Norwegians continue to migrate to the United States and Canada, and continue to contribute to the arts, industry, academics and to the social fabric of their adopted countries.

What drives contemporary Norwegian-American migration? The answers may differ dramatically from immigrants of a century ago, but until we can systemically study the reasons, we can't definitively draw distinctions and comparisons between the two groups. In an age where letters are replaced by emails

and diaries are replaced by blogs and Face-book, the oral history becomes a unique opportunity to create a resource of materials with which to begin the study of contemporary immigration. Those immigrants who arrived shortly after World War II are now of an age where their stories need to be captured before memories are irretrievably lost.

The Collaboration

Partnering with the Sons of Norway International is a natural collaboration. Sons of Norway members are interested in Norwegian culture and history, and the oral history project is a logical extension of that interest. Many Sons of Norway members are also well connected in the contemporary Norwegian-American immigrant community and so are personally acquainted with potential oral history candidates. One of the key elements of a successful oral history is a trusting relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, so having an existing friendship or other close acquaintance can help facilitate a successful interview. In addition, the Sons of Norway cultural skills program creates an incentive to develop the technical skills to conduct successful oral history interviews.

Elements of an Oral History Project

Oral history submissions may include recordings or videos of the oral interview, photographs

Project with Sons of Norway

of the subject and items related to their immigration story, as well as copies of relevant documents and correspondence. Over time, we will seek grant opportunities to help us produce transcriptions of the interviews, indexed to provide an aid in helping researchers identify materials pertinent to their research.

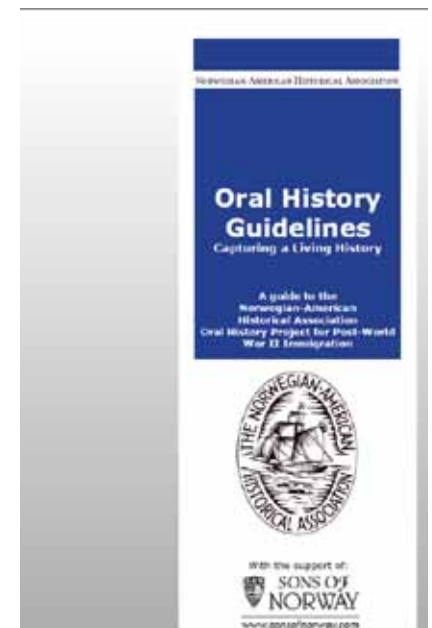
Defining Success

A successful oral history program will create a unique set of resources consisting of oral interviews from individuals representing a broad range of life experiences, ages and backgrounds. The oral interviews will meet standards for sound interviewing skills, technical quality and historical significance. To assist interviewers, we have created a Guide to Oral History which is posted as a downloadable PDF file on our website (<http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/oralhistory/NAHAoralhistoryguidelines2012.pdf>). The guide contains information and helpful hints on how to conduct a successful oral history interview, including sample questions, release forms and indexing guides. Ultimately, we hope to create a vibrant resource of personal recollections for use by future historians, family members and researchers.

Other Benefits of the Oral History Process

Creating an oral history record can produce other tangible benefits to the interviewer and interviewee.

Family members can be drawn into the process and as a result, may develop an increased interest in their family history and ethnic heritage. The resulting recordings and documents will be a treasured piece of shared family history for current and future generations. Even the act of reminiscing can have positive effects on self-esteem, outlook and strengthening trusting relationships between the interviewer and interviewee (Thorsheim and Roberts, 2000).



Download your copy at:

www.naha.stolaf.edu/oralhistory/

Rowberg Clippings Digitization Project now Underway Gary DeKrey, NAHA Archivist

The Minnesota Historical Society Awards NAHA a Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant

One of the treasures of the NAHA Archives is our collection of obituaries and other family newspaper clippings. It is named for Andrew Rowberg, long-time publisher of the Northfield Independent. He began the collection many decades ago, drawing in particular on the Norwegian-American newspaper press. The collection has grown over the years to well over 300,000 clippings – many in Norwegian – that are organized in 300 card file drawers and 140 note-book-sized scrapbooks. It is an indispensable resource for looking into the lives, families, and careers of Norwegian-Americans from the Upper

Midwest; and it is heavily used by genealogists and archives visitors. Volunteer Lee Rokke has spent countless hours indexing portions of the collection, and volunteer Dale Haaland has committed much time to designing software that would enable us to link scans of the clippings to index entries.

We are happy to report that a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant of \$7000 has been awarded to NAHA by the Minnesota Historical Society to begin a pilot scanning project for the Rowberg clippings. Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants are made possible by the Minnesota Legislature from the Arts and Cultural Heritage fund created with passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to the Minnesota Constitution in November 2008. The grants are awarded to support projects of

enduring value for the cause of history and historical preservation across the state.

The pilot project will involve scanning about 35,000 Rowberg clippings cards. The work began on July 1, and most of the scanning will be completed by student workers by the end of the summer. The work will continue in the summer of 2013 when index entries for these clippings will be completed and entered in a database that will link individual names to scans. We will, by that time, have perfected the process and be ready to consider how to complete the scanning and indexing of the remainder of the collection. Gary DeKrey and Jeff Sauve are supervising the project with the technical advice and assistance of Dale Haaland.

“It is wonderful to see so many communities and local organizations benefitting from the Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants,” said Britta Bloomberg, deputy state historic preservation officer. “Minnesotans should be proud of the unprecedented opportunities these grants provide for organizations to preserve and share our history and cultural heritage.” NAHA has enjoyed many opportunities to partner with the Minnesota Historical Society over the years. The Society’s support for this particular project is greatly appreciated.



St. Olaf students Josh Wold and Kevin Jackson are handling the bulk of the Rowberg imaging duties in the summer of 2012

Gary DeKrey
NAHA Archivist

Play Ball! Jeff Sauve, Associate NAHA Archivist

A recently donated yellowed and faded newspaper clipping regarding the Sorlien Brothers baseball team sparked interest in learning more about their remarkable past.

Nearly a century before Kevin Costner's character Ray Kinsella, an Iowa corn farmer, took to the diamond in the popular 1989 movie "Field of Dreams," the Sorlien family constructed its own field of dreams on their Bode, Iowa, farm.

John Hanson Sorlien, born in Nordreland, Oppedal, Norway, was known as a "great lover of baseball" who had played in the days of "no glove, mask or chest protector." Sorlien was known to stop his threshing rig on a weekday to watch a local game take place in the field.

As a father of 16 children, of which nine were boys, John encouraged his

sons to play the game whenever possible. Clippings attest to the boys' love of the game:

The boys, while on the farm, would use the noon rest period to toss the ball around. Arne and Olvin would tuck a ball and glove in their back pockets before cultivating corn—then they'd give the horses 'occasional' rests so they could play catch.

The boys could hardly wait until chores were completed and supper eaten to get to the diamond where they could play until dark.

By 1915 the boys were considered a formidable team. Winning came easily and recognition followed in newspapers ranging from Miami to Colorado Springs. Opposing teams came a distance to play the brothers and publicity often stated that "big crowds" were expected

for games where there was an opportunity to see "nine brothers playing ball." One newspaper said:

The families that can present nine good ball players are few and far between, and with its youngest members enrolled at Luther, the school looks to the time when the Sorlien battery will be the nemesis of visiting teams.

A memorable game took place May 24, 1915, when the Sorlien brothers, ranging in age from 15 to 32, played Luther College. Again a large crowd assembled to watch a historic game. Three of the older brothers had previously attended Luther and three of the younger brothers were currently enrolled in the school's preparatory department.

To outfit themselves, the brothers borrowed uniforms from the Bode city team, Luther College and one from brother Carl's team in Rawson, N.D. Appearing on field in mismatched outfits did not stymie their ability to compete.



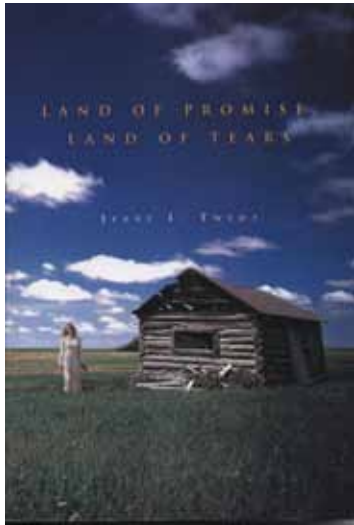
Brothers: Magnus, James, Albert, Leon, Carl, Henry, Olvin, Arne and Oscar

"What's New in the Archives" will appear in the next newsletter to be mailed in November 2012.

Book Review by Judy Sostad, NAHA Volunteer

Other recommended reading

Land of Promise, Land of Tears



Not all is death and hardship in this biographical novel written by Jerry L. Twedt about his great grandparents Ole and Helena Branjord of the Story City, Iowa area.

His accounts of the family's real life experiences, such as their Thanksgiving celebration, a prairie fire, school situations, nefarious behaviors of local people, vestiges of "class status" issues brought from Norway, and the underlying issues leading to the church schism provide a realistic backdrop of the immigrant history, about which those of us who have our own immigrant stories can relate.

Twedt condensed the happenings of several years into a nine-month period in 1869. His style is very readable and the personalities

described are very real and entertaining. His grammar, sentence structure and realistic dialog kept me engaged from the first page to the last.

About the Author

Jerry L. Twedt was born in rural central Iowa and earned his B.A. from Luther College before serving in the United States Army as a member of the Counter-Intelligence Corps. After his service, he went on to earn his M.A. in theatre from the University of Illinois. The author worked for many years as a television producer-director and twice won the National Association of Television Program Executives award for the best locally produced program in the nation. He has published a number of plays and has authored two previous books: *Holiday Stories* and *Growing Up In The 40's* originally published by Iowa State University Press. Now retired and living in Florida, Mr. Twedt is married with two grown children and enjoys tennis, golf, and reading.

Land of Promise, Land of Tears can be ordered through the publisher, AuthorHouse at www.authorhouse.com, or through online booksellers Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble. The book is available in hardcover, soft cover and both Nook and Kindle e-book editions.

NAHA member Marvin Hammer of Woodbury, Minn., recommends *Oleanna, a Novel of Norway in 1905* by Julie K. Rose, available in paperback and e-book from major online retailers like Amazon and Barnes and Noble. From her website: "Set during the separation of Norway from Sweden in 1905, *Oleanna* is a richly detailed novel of love and loss was inspired by the life of my great-great-aunts."

Marvin also informed us that Irene Levin Berman, author of *We are Going to Pick Potatoes*, is going to be appearing at Temple Israel in Minneapolis November 9-10, 2012. This book is the true story of Irene's experiences during the Nazi invasion of Norway in World War II.

What I'm reading:

From Peasants to Farmers, The Migration from Balestrand, Norway to the Upper Middle West, by Jon Gjerde. Published in 1985 by Cambridge University Press, this book traces the migration to and through the middle United States, examining social and economic forces in Europe and the United States. Jon argues that the migration was not the result of a societal transformation, but the attempt to maintain a traditional way of life in the face of external change. For those who have ancestors from Balestrand, this may help answer the question, "Why did they leave?"

Jackie Henry,
Administrative Director

Biennial Meeting Schedule

The NAHA Biennial members meeting will be held on **Saturday, October 20th, 2012** on the campus of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. The tentative schedule is as follows:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Registration Join us for coffee and treats in the Sun Ballroom on the 3rd floor of Buntrock Commons.	Sun Ballroom
9:00 a.m. - 9:15 Welcome NAHA President Brian Rude will kick off the day's event with brief comments.	Sun Ballroom
9:30 - 10:30 Morning Learning Sessions, held concurrently Session One - David Kamm, Luther College Art Historian and Museum Curator, "One in a Thousand: Ole Rasmussen Dahl and the American Civil War". Learn about a Norwegian-American artist who captures battlefield images in his sketches.	Black Ballroom
Session Two - The Oral History Project. A panel of experts will share their tips and techniques for creating a memorable and useful oral history interview. Includes an overview of the Post World War II Oral History Collaboration with Sons of Norway, International.	Gold Ballroom
11:00 a.m. to noon - Keynote Session: "The Life and Music of Theodora Cormontan" presented by Michael and Bonnie Jorgensen.	Valhalla/Kings Room Complex
Noon - 12:45 p.m. Biennial members business meeting.	Valhalla/Kings Room Complex
12:45 - 1:45 p.m. Luncheon for Members and Guests in the Sun Ballroom	Sun Room
2:00 p.m. Afternoon Learning Sessions, held concurrently Session One - <i>From America to Norway</i> - an introduction to NAHA's newest publication. Presented by NAHA Editor, Todd Nichol.	Black Ballroom
Session Two - Tour NAHA genealogical and historical resources. Start at any point and allow about 15 minutes for each stop. Maps will be provided, with guides at each location to help you explore. NAHA Archives - Rolvaag Library Room 200/Special Collections Rowberg Room - Rolvaag Library Room 211/Special Collections The Rolvaag Library Collection - 3rd (Main) Floor Reference Room	Rolvaag Library and Special Collections
3:00 p.m. - Final wrap up and book launch	Sun Ballroom

NAHA Biennial Meeting Registration

Registrations postmarked after October 12, 2012 will be accepted on a "space available" basis. You may also register online and/or download the paper registration form and schedule from www.naha.stolaf.edu. Non-members are welcome!

Name (s) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Zip/Postal _____

Email: _____ Telephone (_____) _____ - _____

Registration Options

Full Registration (includes a.m. refreshments, luncheon and entry to all events)

Member \$40 per person x number of persons _____ = \$ _____

Non-Member \$50 per person x number of persons _____ = \$ _____

Half Day Registration (includes morning OR afternoon learning session, does not include luncheon)

Choose One _____ Morning Sessions _____ Afternoon Session

Member \$10 per person x number of persons _____ = \$ _____

Non-Member \$15 per person x number of persons _____ = \$ _____

Keynote and Luncheon Only (11 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.)

Member \$30 per person x number of persons _____ = \$ _____

Non-Member \$40 per person x number of persons _____ = \$ _____

Payment Method

Check enclosed _____ (make checks payable to NAHA)

Credit card payment (VISA, Mastercard, Discover or American Express)

Name as it appears on card (Please print) _____

Card Number _____

CVS Code _____ Signature of Cardholder _____

Daytime Phone Number - in case we have questions about your order (_____) _____ - _____

Vegetarian Entree Requested _____

Other special requests _____

Biennial Meeting Preview

The 2012 NAHA Biennial Meeting is shaping up to be an enjoyable and stimulating day for our members and guests. Here is a brief summary of the presentations and speakers you can expect to see.



Keynote: Michael and Bonnie Jorgensen, “The Life and Music of Theodora Cormontant”

Bonnie and Michael Jorgensen are proud to present the life and music of the Norwegian-American composer Theodora Cormontan (1840-1922). Theodora emigrated from her native Norway to south central Minnesota in 1887 and spent the next thirty years of her life there, until she moved to the Aase Haugen Home in Decorah, Iowa in 1917.

Since rediscovering over 150 of her handwritten manuscript compositions in 2011 (in addition to a number of her published works), the Jorgensens have researched Cormontan’s life and edited and prepared some of her music. Bonnie portrays Theodora (an accomplished pianist). Michael tells Theodora’s story and sings.

In this presentation you will learn a little about Theodora’s life in

Norway and the many challenges she faced in the United States. You will also hear the wonderful music of this gifted musician, as well as a consideration of her musical influences and aspirations and the potential significance of this discovery.

Learning Session Presenters



David Kamm - “One in a Thousand: Ole Rasmussen Dahl and the American Civil War”

David Kamm is an assistant professor of art and the art gallery coordinator at Luther College, Decorah, IA, where his primary teaching duties are Printmaking and Art Foundations. He also assists in the management of the Luther College Fine Arts Collection. David earned his B.A. degree in art education from Wartburg College, and holds M.A. and M.F.A. degrees in printmaking from the University of Iowa. His art has been shown in several solo and group exhibitions, and he is a frequent presenter at national conferences on art and education, including CAA (College

Art Association) and FATE (Foundations in Art: Theory and Education). He has participated in two National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institutes; the Lutheran Academy of Scholars at Harvard University; a Fulbright Project to Russia; and the Artist-in-Residence Program at the Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

Oral History Panelists:

Dr. Odd Lovoll, past NAHA editor, noted scholar and author of a number of books about Norwegian-American immigration. Dr. Lovoll has recorded oral histories as an interviewer and utilized oral histories in his scholarly work. He brings a unique perspective as a creator and end user of oral histories.

Dr. Howard Thorsheim, Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at St. Olaf College. Dr. Thorsheim co-authored *I Remember When, Activity Ideas to Help People Reminisce* (2000) and *Reminiscing Together* (1990).

Joe Hoover, Digital Technology Outreach Specialist, Minnesota Historical Society. Joe will share tips on how to use current technology to capture a high quality oral history interview.



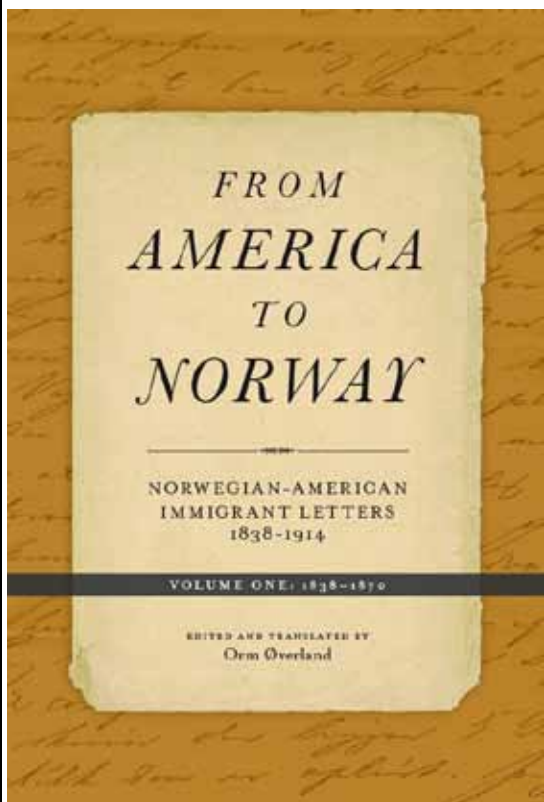
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Change Service Requested



Book Launch for *From America to Norway*

The book launch for our next publication, *From America to Norway, Norwegian-American Letters 1838 - 1914, Vol. One*, will be held in conjunction with the biennial members meeting to be held on Saturday October 20, 2012 at St. Olaf College (additional information and registration materials appear elsewhere in this newsletter). All NAHA members in good standing who attend will receive their copy at that time. We will begin mailing the publication to all other members the week following the meeting. If you would like to order extra copies as gifts or to donate to a local organization or library, call or write to us at the address above.

Volume Two of the series is tentatively scheduled for Fall of 2014, in conjunction with the 2014 Biennial Members Meeting. The third volume, and cumulative index will most likely be published for the subsequent biennial meeting in 2016.

NAHA publications are made possible through membership fees, income from endowed funds and individual gifts. We are so grateful for your generous and consistent donations, and for the past members who valued our mission enough to establish perpetual support through their estate gifts.