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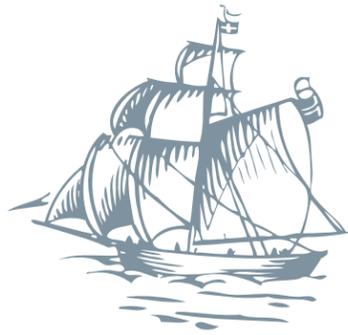
New to the
Archives



Currents

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION | SUMMER 2015 VOLUME 158





THE BUZZ OF SUMMER

Do you imagine that things quiet down at the Norwegian-American Historical Association during the summer? Think again! NAHA has been buzzing with activity this summer. We have welcomed scholars from across the United States and Europe to research in the Archives. And we have greeted family genealogists who come to NAHA to expand their family trees and explore St. Olaf College's extensive collection of *bygdebøker* (histories of Norwegian farms and families).

In addition to patrons, there are student workers who spend the summer digitizing photos, editing video, and lending a hand with administrative tasks. We also enjoy the help of our stalwart, year-round volunteers who share their skills, such as helping design and manage our databases, updating our collections, and assisting patrons in their research. This summer we are also fortunate to have two student volunteers who have helped us out with cataloging, communications, and more.

Be sure to check out the contributions from our volunteers in this issue of *Currents*. Luke Shurson '17 wrote "Bringing New Life to Old Data," which highlights research conducted in the NAHA archives last summer. And Alexander Quanbeck '17 interviewed Orm Øverland, editor and translator of our *From America to Norway* series. You can also find tips for genealogical research from Dale Hovland on page 5.

This summer we are also busy planning our upcoming 90th anniversary celebration, which will be held at the Minnesota History Center on Saturday, October 10. Mark your calendar and join us for a noon luncheon and panel discussion, when we will remember our past as we consider our future. And what would an anniversary celebration be without cake, music, and gifts? Please consider a gift of \$90 in honor of our 90th! Contributions in honor of our anniversary will be added to our Club 2014 capital campaign for climate controlled archives.

Enjoy these final days of summer, and I hope to see many of you at our celebration in October!

Amy Boxrud, Director



on the cover

A young O. M. Norlie (second from right) serves on the Board of Publications of Augsburg Publishing House in Minneapolis, 1914. For more on Norlie's work, see page 6.

in brief

CLUB 2014 CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The Norwegian-American Historical Association is the permanent home for North America's largest collection of letters, papers, books, photographs, periodicals, and newspapers related to Norwegian-American life. The ability of NAHA to safeguard its collections depends on a climate-controlled archive to ensure that its contents will be available for generations to come.

Early in 2014, NAHA set the goal of securing \$160,000 to fund the installation of a climate control system that meets industry

THANK YOU TO OUR CLUB 2014 DONORS!



standards. To date, we've raised more than \$131,200 — more than 80 percent of our goal!

Because our project is part of a larger climate control initiative for St. Olaf College's Rølvaag Memorial Library, where NAHA is housed, our timeline is linked to that of the college. In the summer of 2017, the space we envision as the future

home of the NAHA archives will be vacant and ready for remodeling. In the meantime, we have invested our campaign funds in a CD, so they can continue to grow until construction begins.

To support Club 2014, visit naha.stolaf.edu or contact Amy Boxrud at 507-786-3221 or email boxrud@stolaf.edu.



SUMMER STUDENTS

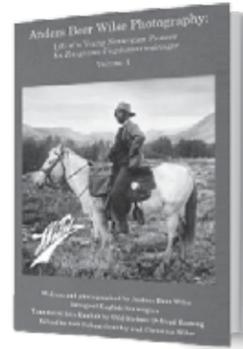
Meet the St. Olaf College students who are lending a hand in the NAHA office and archives this summer. Row 1, from left: Archives Assistant Kate Wellenstein '16, Madison, Wisc.; Special Collections Assistant Madison Skalski '18, Northfield, Minn.; Row 2, from left: Volunteer Luke Shurson '17, Yucaipa, Calif.; Archives Assistant Tim Apolloni '17, Shoreview, Minn.; Volunteer Alexander Quanbeck '17, New Brighton, Minn.

MEMBER NONFICTION

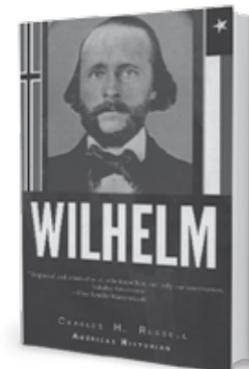
Summer isn't over yet! There's still time to check out these new nonfiction titles, written or published by NAHA members.



På Sporet Av Familien: Kilder og metoder i slektsgransking
By Liv Marit Haakenstad
Published by Vigmostad & Bjørke AS, 2015
Language: Norwegian only
A how-to on filling out the family tree using Internet and archival sources. NOK 499, vigmostadbjorke.no



Anders Beer Wilse Photography: Life of a Young Norwegian Pioneer (En Emigrants Ungdomserindringer), Volume 1
By Anders Beer Wilse
Published by Astri My Astri Publishing, 2015
Language: English / Norwegian
The original account by Norwegian photographer Anders Beer Wilse (1865–1949), translated and edited for a bilingual audience. More than 100 Wilse images of Norway and America. \$19.95, astrimyastri.com



Wilhelm
By Charles H. Russell
Published by U.S.A. Patriot Press, 2015
Language: English
William Wærenskjold's story takes readers from a Christiania jail to the Texas frontier. \$30 hardcover, \$15 paperback. bosquemuseum.org

90 YEARS OF NAHA

Join us in commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Norwegian-American Historical Association. We'll be gathering on Saturday,

October 10 at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.

The event will feature a noon luncheon and panel discussion, "The Future of our Past" with special guest panelists Lee Pao Xiong, Director of Hmong Studies at Concordia University; Philip J. Anderson, President of the Swedish American Historical Society; Annette Atkins, regional historian, author, and commentator; and Gary De Krey, archivist for the Norwegian-American Historical Association.



90 for the 90th!

In honor of the Association's 90th anniversary, please consider a making a special gift of \$90. These donations will be added to our Club 2014 capital campaign for climate-controlled archives. Gifts can be made online at naha.stolaf.edu or mailed to NAHA, 1510 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, MN 55057.

Members — watch for your invitation to arrive soon. Information about the event will also be available on our website.

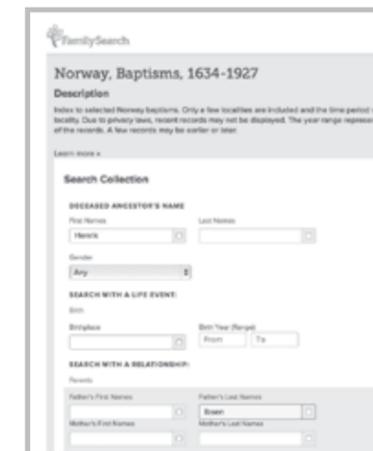
BAPTISMAL RECORDS CAN FILL OUT THE FAMILY TREE

Baptismal data can provide more than basic facts. It might also help you identify unknown family members.

FamilySearch.org, sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, offers free access to baptisms, burials, and marriage records generated from Norwegian church registers.

Go to FamilySearch.org > Search > Research by Location. Click Norway on the map and then select it from the menu. Scroll down to select Norway, Baptisms, 1634–1927.

For example, to find Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's baptismal record, enter his name in the appropriate fields.



TIP: For better results, search with a relationship. Click Parents and enter the last name under the father's last name.

After finding your subject, you may find unknown siblings by conducting a new search with the parents' names only.

Henrich Johan Knudsen	
Norway, Baptisms	
Name:	Henrich Johan Knudsen
Gender:	Male
Birth Date:	20 Mar 1828
Christening Date:	28 Mar 1828
Christening Place:	SKIEN, TELEMAR, NORW
Father's Name:	Knud Ibsen
Mother's Name:	Marikken Altenborg
System Origin:	Norway-EASy , GS Film Number: 127012 ,

For example, a search for Knud Ibsen and Marikken Altenborg yields a list of Henrik (Henrich) and siblings.

Norway, Baptisms, 1634-1927		
1-7 of 7 results for >Father Name: knud Ibsen, Mother Name: ma		
Number of results to show: 25 50 75		
Name	Events	
Johan Altenborg Knudsen Norway, Baptisms, 1634-1927	birth: 3 October 1826 christening: 8 October 1826 residence: 1826	SKIEN, TELEMAR, NORW
Henrich Johan Knudsen Norway, Baptisms, 1634-1927	birth: 20 March 1828 christening: 28 March 1828 residence: 1828	SKIEN, TELEMAR, NORW
Johan Andreas Altenborg Knudsen Norway, Baptisms, 1634-1927	birth: 17 March 1830 christening: 28 March 1830 residence: 1830	SKIEN, TELEMAR, NORW
Henrich Johan Knudsen Norway, Baptisms, 1634-1927	christening: 28 March 1828	SKIEN, TELEMAR, NORW
Johan Andreas Altenborg Knudsen Norway, Baptisms, 1634-1927	christening: 28 March 1830	SKIEN, TELEMAR, NORW
Johan Altenborg Knudsen Norway, Baptisms, 1634-1927	christening: 8 October 1826	SKIEN, TELEMAR, NORW

For more information on Norwegian church records, visit FamilySearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Norway_Church_Records.

Dale Hovland teaches classes on Norwegian genealogy and has volunteered for NAHA since 2004.

PLANNED GIVING ENSURES THE STORY LIVES ON

Looking for a lasting way to express your commitment to NAHA? After providing for loved ones in your will, consider a planned gift of money, stock, or property to NAHA. Your gift will be an enduring commitment to preserving the Norwegian-American story, while helping ensure NAHA's long-term future. For more information on how to include the Association in your charitable giving plans, contact Amy Boxrud at 507-786-3221 or email boxrud@stolaf.edu.

NORDIC WHITENESS CONFERENCE IN OSLO

The National Library of Norway and Det norskamerikanske historielaget i Norge (NAHA-Norge), with support from Fritt Ord Foundation, will host "Nordic Whiteness: Export of and Assimilation into the Ideal in a Comparative Historical Perspective" at Oslo's National Library of Norway on November 11, 2015. The conference will examine 19th- and 20th-century emigration from the Nordic countries to the United States as well as contemporary immigration to the Nordic countries. Participants include former NAHA Editor and Professor Emeritus Odd S. Lovoll, NAHA Board Member and Professor Emerita Betty Bergland, and Editor of *Norwegian-American Essays*, Dr. Terje Hasle Joranger. For more information contact Joranger at [tmh-jora@online.no](mailto:tjh-jora@online.no).



Old Holden Church,
Goodhue County,
Minnesota, 1891

BRINGING NEW LIFE TO OLD DATA

A ST. OLAF COLLEGE PROFESSOR AND STUDENT USE MODERN TECHNOLOGY TO INTERPRET LUTHERAN LIFE IN AMERICA.

BY LUKE SHURSON

For many people, perceptions of Minnesota focus on the Scandinavian heritage of the state and the Lutheran faith that these immigrants brought with them. Now using research in part from the archives of the Norwegian-American Historical Association, St. Olaf College Professor of Religion L. DeAne Lagerquist and her student, Nora Uhrich '16, have documented and presented that history in a project called *Locating Lutheranism*. With a website dedicated to the project, they hope to demonstrate the power of digital media to make early 20th-century data accessible to modern researchers.

Locating Lutheranism began with *Norske Lutherske Menigheter i Amerika 1843–1916*, a two-volume work compiled by Norwegian-American historian O. M. Norlie detailing the names and locations of Lutheran congregations in North America. These masses of data were rich in history, but using modern research methods on them, such as finding the most common names of congregations, proved to be next to impossible in their paper form, as researchers would need to spend countless hours combing through hundred-year-old lists of congregations. Lagerquist and Uhrich spent hours digitizing the records and creating a database of congregations with a search function that could generate data in seconds.

As the project progressed, it took on broader goals. "It started with these 19th-century Norwegian-American Lutheran

congregations in Minnesota, but I hope in the long run that it will become a bigger site that's really locating Lutheranism in the American religious landscape," says Lagerquist. In order to begin this process, she began researching individual congregations that she felt represented each of the major groups, or synods, of Norwegian Lutheranism. Visitors to the website can explore the history and trace the expansion of congregations using a series of interactive maps that clarify the complex relationships between churches.

Lagerquist's research into these congregations utilized a combination of civic, ethnic, and ecclesial archives to present a more complete perspective on Norwegian Lutheranism in Minnesota. The NAHA archives provided much of the information on several churches that came from the Norwegian Synod, a mainline branch of the Norwegian-American Lutheranism that attempted to preserve many of the traditions of the Church of Norway. The website

presents this information in its section on the churches in and around Kenyon and Northfield. For each of these churches, viewers can explore interactive timelines and maps to learn more about the founding, growth, and modern history of these Norwegian-American congregations.

These interactive displays form the heart of the project and reflect its goal of presenting the findings concisely and clearly. Because of the volume of data collected, Lagerquist and Uhrich had to find a balance between offering raw data and presenting a narrative for that data. As Lagerquist put it, "Were we trying to make an archive to which other people could come to do research, or were we making an exhibit that other people could come and learn from?" More simply, "Were we having a grocery store or were we giving a dinner? Eventually, we came to understand that we were giving a dinner." Thus, the *Locating Lutheranism* site seeks to provide a creative and interactive platform for presenting specific findings of the team's work.

For those who exhaust the exhibition as it currently stands and are eager to explore some of the sources used in the project, the *Locating Lutheranism* website contains a number of resources for further investigation. Readers will find links to Norlie's original congregational records, a full database of Norwegian Lutheran pastors in the Upper Midwest, a link to a digital versions of both of Norlie's volumes, and other resources that feature the role of Lutheranism within the American religious landscape.



Locating Lutheranism applies digital tools to the data collected by O. M. Norlie.

PHOTO (RIGHT) COURTESY ST. OLAF COLLEGE ARCHIVES



While the *Locating Lutheranism* website is up and running, the current site is by no means the final product. Lagerquist envisions a number of possibilities for the project, including digitizing and adding more data, and hosting special exhibits on particular aspects of life in the Norwegian Lutheran churches of America, such as their hymnody. Ultimately, any expansion will center around what Lagerquist believes is the project's central principle: "We have this data; how can we use new tools to make it more accessible and more comprehensible?"

Locating Lutheranism can be accessed at pages.stolaf.edu/locluth/. □

Luke Shurson '17 is a NAHA volunteer and a student at St. Olaf College. He is majoring in religion and history and completing a concentration in Nordic studies.

From top:
Confirmation class,
Valley Grove Lutheran
Church, Nerstrand,
Minnesota, 1988;
Norlie provides a
map of Norwegian
population in
the United States
and Canada.



LETTERS HOME



NAHA distributed the first two volumes of *From America to Norway* to its members in 2012 and 2014. The third and final volume is scheduled for release in the fall of 2016.

ORM ØVERLAND HAS SPENT MUCH OF HIS CAREER STUDYING IMMIGRANT LETTERS AS A LITERARY FORM. HIS NEWEST WORK WITH NAHA WILL BE RELEASED FALL 2016.

BY
ALEXANDER
QUANBECK

Orm Overland, professor emeritus of American literature at Bergen University, has written extensively on the Norwegian-American experience, focusing especially on the significance of literature and letters in the lives of immigrants. His most recent work published by NAHA is *From America to Norway: Norwegian-American Immigrant Letters 1838–1914*. Based on the seven-volume Norwegian edition *Fra Amerika til Norge*, the series consists of collections of letters in the Norwegian National Archives (*Riksarkivet*), sent to Norway by immigrants in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The third and final volume, with letters dated 1893–1914, provides a continuation of letter series from the previous

volumes as well as featuring communication from relative newcomers to America, giving readers a glimpse into the world of both newly arrived and settled Norwegian-Americans around the turn of the twentieth-century.

In this interview, we asked Overland to tell us about the *From America to Norway* series in general and to discuss some of the challenges that went into translating and editing these volumes.

NAHA: In the preface of the first volume of *From America to Norway*, you describe the technical issues involved in translation, including “difficult handwriting, phonetic spellings, and code switching.” However, you explain that “the greatest challenge for

a translator of these letters is to translate these nineteenth century texts by untrained and uneducated writers into English texts for educated twenty-first century readers.” Would you elaborate on some of these challenges? How did you address them?

Orm Overland: When I first began to work with the immigrant letters in the Norwegian National Archives, I was struck by the poor writing skills of most letter writers, especially those who wrote in the early decades of immigration. To present-day readers they may appear to be both uneducated and naïve. I soon realized, however, that poor writing skills as well as ignorance about social and cultural aspects of their new land must

not be seen as an indicators of poor intelligence. On the contrary, the challenges of early migration required both intellectual and emotional qualities. The translator of their letters must therefore present them in a grammatically and orthographically correct English that is commensurate with their significant achievement and not try to create an English translation preserving the syntactical, grammatical, and orthographical shortcomings of the original. To me this has been an issue of respect for these writers and their achievement.

NAHA: Could you briefly discuss the demographics of the immigrants whose letters you included?

ØØ: Not all Norwegian counties (*fylker*) are represented in the collection in the National Archives. The most noticeable omission is letters sent to the three northernmost counties of Nordland, Troms, and Finnmark. These omissions reflect the limitations of the earliest efforts to collect and preserve letters from Norwegian immigrants. (The central role of NAHA in these efforts is described in the introduction to the third volume.) There are now collections of letters in several archives in counties that are not well represented in the National Archives. However, the experiences and challenges of immigration were much the same whether you came from one county or another. The main differentiating factor was time, and readers of *From America to Norway* can appreciate this when *continued on page 10* ...

TO READ MORE

For more immigrant letters, here are some additional collections to explore.

Det smærter mig meget at nedskrive disse linjer til Eder: Heddal-Telemark-Wisconsin: en utvandrerhistorie i brev
Edited by Orm Overland (Telemark historielag, 1995). Available in Norwegian only.

Frontier Parsonage: The Letters of Olaus Fredrik Duus, Norwegian Pastor in Wisconsin, 1855–1858
Edited by Theodore C. Blegen (NAHA, 1947). Out of print.

Frontier Mother: The Letters of Gro Svendsen
Translated and edited by Pauline Farseth and Theodore C. Blegen (NAHA, 1950). Out of print.

In Their Own Words: Letters from Norwegian Immigrants
Edited and translated by Solveig Zempel (NAHA, 1991). Published in cooperation with the University of Minnesota Press. Out of print.

Land of Their Choice: The Immigrants Write Home
Edited and translated by Theodore Blegen (University of Minnesota Press, 1955).

The Lady with the Pen: Elise Wærenskjold
Edited by Clarence A. Clausen (NAHA, 1961). Out of print.

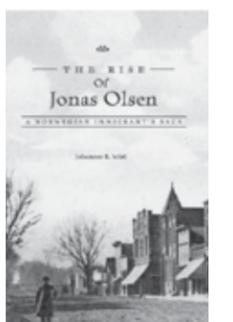
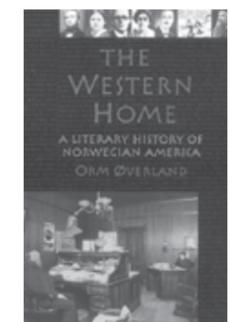
MORE NAHA PUBLICATIONS BY ORM ØVERLAND:

The Western Home: A Literary History of Norwegian America
(NAHA, 1996). Distributed by University of Illinois Press. \$44.95

The Rise of Jonas Olsen: A Norwegian Immigrant’s Saga
By Johannes B. Wist, translated by Orm Overland (NAHA, 2006). \$29.95

For a full list of NAHA publications, visit naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/allpubs.htm. Members receive a 25 percent discount on any available NAHA publication. To order, call 507-786-3221.

Out of print titles may be available in libraries or for sale online. Some used copies may be available through NAHA.



continued from page 9 ...

reading letters from the 1850s as well as the 1890s.

NAHA: Could you describe some of the differences between the Norwegian and American versions of the series?

OØ: The major difference between the two versions is the obvious one of language. As explained earlier, most early immigrants were not used to expressing themselves in writing and their letters are often difficult to read today because of spelling and grammar. Consequently, readers of the NAHA edition will have a rather different reading experience from that of the readers of the Norwegian edition. As for selection, the three first volumes of the Norwegian edition included all letters in the collection while a selection process became necessary for the concluding four volumes. For the NAHA edition an effort was made to give priority to letter series, that is, to letters by one writer or by related writers.

NAHA: Yes, one of the notable characteristics of these volumes is the inclusion of series of letters, in which you have included letters written by the same immigrant over the course of years or decades. What can we learn from the particular genre of the letter series?

OØ: While the single letter may be compared to a snapshot, a series of letters covering several decades perhaps may be compared to an autobiography. One distinguishing characteristic of the letter series is that the writer could not know

anything about her situation at the time of her next letter. With the passage of time, letter writers become more integrated in their new lives. Present-day readers may sense how the new home gradually becomes more important than the old one.

NAHA: Would you tell us a little bit about your own scholarly and personal interest in studying immigrant letters?

OØ: I came to the study of immigrant letters through my study of the literature by immigrants from Norway and other countries, a study that made me aware of the large body of American literature written in languages other than English. When I was invited to publish the immigrant letters in the Norwegian National Archives, I soon realized the immense value of these letters, not only as sources for immigrant history, but as documents of the lives of the individuals who made this history happen. I brought my reading skills and approaches to literary texts to my study of immigrant letters, and I became fascinated by the stories and experiences these documents could reveal to a reader who took them as seriously as the poems and novels of well-known writers. The letters have taught me much about immigrant history, but even more, these letters have taught me about the faith, emotions, and experiences of the many individual immigrants whose letters I have been privileged to live with over many years. □

Alexander Quanbeck '17 is a NAHA volunteer and a student at St. Olaf College, where he is majoring in history and philosophy.

new to the archives

If you have Norwegian-American letters, diaries, photographs, family histories, recordings, and community or congregational materials at home, or if you know of such items in the hands of others, please contact us about donation possibilities. The Archives continue to benefit from the generosity of members and friends who have made important donations, and we welcome your help in building the collection. We are particularly interested in materials that bear on the experiences of post-World War II Norwegian immigrants and in Canadian materials. Although we aren't able to acknowledge all donations here, we do appreciate every donation, large and small. Families may be sure that donations made to the NAHA archives will remain open for future family consultations.

DONATED APRIL 1 – JUNE 30, 2015

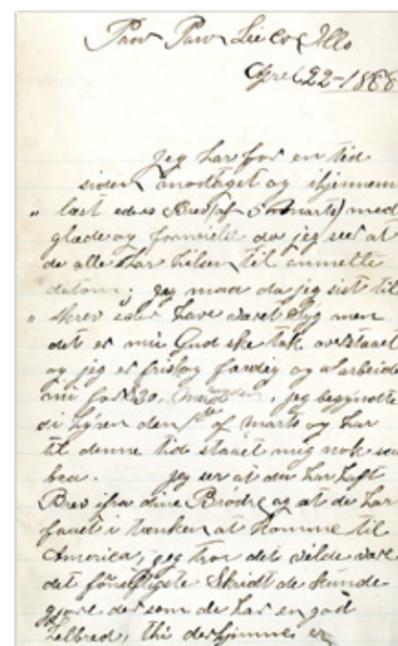
FAMILY HISTORIES, MEMOIRS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

- American-Scandinavian Forum (Boston) Papers: official board documents, 1966–1977. Added to P1700. Donated by NAHA member Vera Ryan Gregg.

- Rodning, Richard A. *The Clearing: Roots and Branches of the Rodning Family in Norway and America. With Autobiographical Sketch by Syver S. Rodning* (2010). The family settled in Minnewauken, N. Dak. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by the author.

- South New Hope Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Portage County, Wisconsin, Congregational Records, 1888–1967 and South New Hope Cemetery Association Records, 1967–2007 (prepared by the South New Hope Cemetery Association, Amherst Junction, Wisc.). Added to P0537 Congregation Papers. Donated by Elaine Anderson.

- Swenson, Lester. *These Two Are Champions: A chronological book of facts, history, letters, pictures, and interviews about the lives of two amazing women* (2014). The book tells the life story of twins, Celia (1884–1978) and Linnie Thompson



(1884–1979) from Radcliffe, Iowa. Celia served as a missionary and teacher in Madagascar; and Linnie worked as a nurse and family caregiver. Donation also includes more than one hundred original letters, spanning the years 1906–76, which were used as the basis of the book. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by the author.

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

- Chicago Norden, 1874–79 (incomplete). Added to Norwegian-American Newspapers, Special Collections, Rølvaag Library, St. Olaf College. Donated by Kåre Hellum.
- Vestlandet newsletter (1979–2004). Added to P0465 Bygdslagene Papers/Vestlandslag. Donated by Ann Romo, NAHA member and President of Vestlandslag.



From left: Roy and Guttorm Midge (Mary Dalbotten photo collection); Unknown individuals from Rydholm and Williams family photographs. Below, left: Letter to Sjur L. Berkeland from Knudt Larson, Lee County, Ill., April 22, 1888.

PHOTOGRAPHS

- Dalbotten-Midje family papers. Two vintage albums containing more than sixty formal family and individual photographs, primarily from the Goodhue County, Minnesota area (1870s–1900s). Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Mary Dalbotten, Associate NAHA Member.
- Rydholm/Williams/Johnson family photographs. Over two hundred formal family and individual photographs and negatives, primarily from Boone and Lee County, Illinois (1860s–1930s). Added to P0655 Photograph Collection. Donated by Kristin Rydholm.



**NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

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naha.stolaf.edu/membership/form.htm

Currents

**The Newsletter of the
Norwegian-American
Historical Association**

Volume 158, Summer 2015

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Amy Boxrud

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Hiawatha House Design

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1898

The Lutheran Ladies' Seminary, Red Wing, Minnesota, opened its doors to 40 young women in 1894. The seminary aimed to provide a top quality education for both mind and body and contribute to students' Christian growth. Before its close in 1920, the school graduated approximately 500 students from its various programs, and many more attended without receiving a degree. To read more, see: "As Sister, Wife, and Mother: Education for Young Norwegian-American Lutheran Women," by L. DeAne Lagerquist, *Norwegian-American Studies*, Vol. 33 (NAHA, 1992), or find it online at naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume33/.