Register now for the NAHA 2016 Biennial Meeting, with a focus on folk music. Details inside.
To understand ourselves we must understand our past. We need to develop an awareness of
the many strands that make up the fabric of our country’s history and the society in which
we live. Important among these are the stories and records of the immigrants who settled
our land. Each ethnic group brought its own character to an ever-expanding diversity. The result is a
cultural richness unique in the world.

Perhaps you’ll agree with me that this statement, found on the website
of the Norwegian-American Historical Association, is a refreshing and
important reminder about our nation during this contentious election year.

The stories to be found in the NAHA archives are the story and the
legacy of a people, now well-settled, whose contributions are significant
to the whole of our nation. The letters, diaries, and photographs in the
archives are a resource to understanding the common experiences shared
among generations of immigrants across the decades. And if we can
understand our own stories, it will help us understand the difficulties
the newest immigrants among us are facing. The story of Norwegian
Americans provides a measure of strength, purpose, surety, and steadiness
to share with others.

There is something core to one’s well-being that requires a sense of place — a sense of
belonging to a place. My hope is that the NAHA archives will always be a resource for learning
and understanding how Norwegian Americans became part of the American story, as well as a
resource for a great many others who are searching for their sense of place and the commonality
of their story in the great landscape and fabric of our country. We will all be stronger for it and
serve a greater purpose than our own.

I look forward to being together at our biennial meeting at St. Olaf College on October 29.
NAHA will have just begun our ninety-second year, and important work is ahead!

Karen A. Humphrey, President
Registration is now open for the NAHA Biennial Meeting on Saturday, October 29. The event will be held at St. Olaf College and focus on Norwegian-American folk music.

The keynote speaker is James Leary, professor emeritus at University of Wisconsin-Madison. A folklorist and scholar of Scandinavian studies, Leary’s work includes *So Ole Says to Lena: Folk Humor of the Upper Midwest* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), and *Polkabilly: How the Goose Island Ramblers Redefined American Folk Music* (Oxford University Press, 2006), and *Folksongs of Another America: Field Recordings from the Upper Midwest, 1937–1946* (book, 5 CDs, and DVD, University of Wisconsin Press, 2015).

Laura Ellestad, a Canadian Hardanger fiddler in a Ph.D. program at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, will also present. Ellestad is researching performance practices among Norwegian-American fiddlers in the Upper Midwest 1900–1970. Also speaking is Amy Shaw, associate professor at St. Catherine University, who is researching the life and work of Norwegian-American fiddler Ole Hendricks (1851–1935).

Along with presentations, NAHA will hold its biennial business meeting, celebrate its successful capital campaign, and elect new members to the Board of Directors. If you are interested in serving on the board, or have a suggested nominee, please contact Amy Boxrud by October 1. The day ends with an open Nordic music session in downtown Northfield. Invite a friend — all are welcome!

For more information or to register, visit naha.stolaf.edu or call 507-786-3221.

From left: NAHA associate archivist Jeff Sauve, Jon Rondestvedt, and Sebastian Surom discover Hinderlie family history.

**THE “AHA!” IN NAHA**

Jon Rondestvedt of Northfield came to the archives in search of a specific date in his Hinderlie family history but came away with much more. Sebastian Surom ’17, a St. Olaf student working in the archives this summer, had just finished copying a collection on loan from a family with Hinderlie ties. Among the papers was a photograph of six pastors that Rondestvedt instantly recognized: One of the men pictured was his great-grandfather, Knud C. Hinderlie. Upon learning this connection, Surom shared several other newly donated items with Rondestvedt that contained references to the Hinderlies, providing many new insights into his family history. “In all, a treasure trove for me and for future generations,” Rondestvedt says. “Tusen takk. Better yet, mange tusen takk!”
JOIN NAHA IN NORWAY, JUNE 2017

June 10–20 Northern Migrations Tour | June 21–24 NAHA-Norge seminar in Stavanger (optional)

The NAHA Northern Migrations Tour begins in Norway’s medieval capital city of Trondheim and continues northward to Bodo. Guided by St. Olaf College Professor Emerita Solveig Zempel, we will visit Donna, the birthplace of Ole Rolvaag; explore Viking and fishing migrations in the Lofoten islands; learn about the seasonal movements of Sami reindeer herders; visit the island of Vega, a UNESCO world heritage site; and much more.

Along the way, we will travel through spectacular landscapes under the midnight sun, enjoy locally-sourced cuisine, and learn about the culture and lifestyle of contemporary northern Norway.

Following the tour, participants have the option of attending the thirteenth NAHA-Norge conference, June 21–24, in Stavanger, site of the first emigrant ship to sail from Norway to the United States. (See the call for papers, p. 7, for more information.)

Note that tour dates are approximate — more information, including final itinerary, cost, and how to register, will be available on the NAHA website in the coming weeks. Interested? Contact us at naha@stolaf.edu or 507-786-3221.
EXPLORE “HERSTORY”

Enjoy the final days of summer with a book! Here are three possibilities to immerse yourself in the fascinating lives of Nordic-American women.

**Seawomen of Iceland: Survival on the Edge**
Meet the brave women of Iceland who have fished the sea, from the tiny, open rowboats of days past to the high-tech fisheries of today. Using extensive historical and field research, Margaret Willson’s narrative is intended for general and academic readers interested in maritime culture, the anthropology of work, Nordic life, and gender studies. 312 pages, University of Washington Press (2016) $34.95. [washington.edu/uwpress/](http://washington.edu/uwpress/)

**The Diary of Elisabeth Koren: 1853–1855**
After her marriage, Elisabeth Koren left a comfortable life in Norway and emigrated to the United States, where her husband was called to serve as the first Lutheran pastor west of the Mississippi. With a translation provided by David T. Nelson, this newly reprinted edition details Koren’s journey and the first few years of her new, rugged life in pioneer America. 410 pages, Vesterheim Museum (2015) $19.95. [store.vesterheim.org](http://store.vesterheim.org)

**Norwegian-American Women: Migration, Communities, and Identities**
Nine scholars offer an interdisciplinary approach to history through a gendered lens. This collection situates women in the history, literature, politics, and culture of both Norway and the new land, interpreting their varied circumstances and the communities they helped build. Edited by Betty Bergland and Lori Ann Lahlum. 368 pages, Minnesota Historical Society Press (2011) $24.95. [mnhs.org](http://mnhs.org)
Editor's Note: For Part 1 of this two-part article, see “Norwegian Farm Names,” in the Spring 2016 issue of Currents (available on naha.stolaf.edu).

A searchable database of Norwegian farm information (for all counties except Finnmark) is available online at tinyurl.com/farmnames. The data comes from Norske Gaardnavne (Norwegian Farm Names), a nineteen-volume set of books based on the work of University of Oslo Professor Oluf Rygh. The volumes are available in Rølvaag Memorial Library at St. Olaf College.

The main page of the resource is available in English or Norwegian and contains documentation and the search form. One or more search fields are used. The % sign is a wild card representing zero or more characters.

For example, this search:
- County = Kristians amt (Oppland County)
- Municipality = Lunner
- Farm name = Hovland%

Produces this result:
Hovland vestre og østre (western and eastern)

A search using the Norwegian version allows paging forward and backward through ten names. This can lead to the listing, shown here, from Bind (Volume) 4, side (page) 133. Each farm has a matrikkelnummer (tax roll number). Farms with close numbers are likely to be physically close, which can aid in locating a farm on a map.

Similar information can be found for more than 55,000 farm names in the database.
CALL FOR PAPERS

Norwegian-American Seminar XIII: “Migration, Minorities, and Freedom of Religion”

The thirteenth seminar of Det norskamerikanske historielaget (NAHA-Norge), titled "Migration, Minorities, and Freedom of Religion" will be held June 21–24, 2017, in Stavanger, Norway.

The seminar welcomes a wide range of topics within Norwegian-American studies. It marks the upcoming bicentennial of the founding of the Quaker community in 1818, and we especially welcome papers focusing on the relationship between migration, minorities, and freedom of religion. We will particularly address the group perspective, including a focus on migration of children, youth, women, Quakers, and others.

NAHA-Norge encourages seminar contributions based on many academic traditions. Topics related to anything from literary, linguistic, and religious studies to history, social science, fine and folk arts, and cultural studies—as well as multi- and interdisciplinary approaches—are appropriate. NAHA-Norge also emphasizes the need to see Norwegian-American studies in the context of international migration and ethnic studies in general. Presentations may be delivered in English or Norwegian, and, except for invited lecturers, should not exceed twenty minutes. We require an abstract in English for all presentations, including those held in Norwegian.

Prospective speakers are invited to submit a half-page proposal and a one-page CV to NAHA-Norge Chair Nils Olav Østrem (nils.o.ostrem@uis.no) or Board Member Ole Jone Eide (ole.j.eide@uis.no) by January 1, 2017. Further information on the conference will be available on the NAHA-Norge website: welcome2.no/naha-norge/.

Third Annual Midwestern History Conference

The Midwestern History Association and the Hauenstein Center at Grand Valley State University invite proposals for papers to be delivered at the Third Annual Midwestern History Conference, June 7, 2017, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This conference continues a discussion commenced during the last two years during collaborative conferences at the Hauenstein Center designed to spark the revival of Midwestern studies.

The Association welcomes proposals that relate to the agricultural and rural history of the American Midwest are particularly encouraged. Some proposals could become part of hybrid panels organized by the Midwestern History Association, the Hauenstein Center, and the Agricultural History Society to be held during a special collaborative session on June 8, 2017.

Individual proposals should be a maximum of 300 words. Panel proposals are also welcome and should be a maximum of 1,000 words. All proposals should be accompanied by the short vitas of the participants. Proposals should be sent to Scott St. Louis at stlouis1@gvsu.edu. There is no registration fee for attending the conference, but there will be a request to RSVP online in the coming months.

To learn more, visit midwestern-history.com. To become a member, contact MHA Secretary Ted Frantz at efrantz@uindy.edu. For information on the Hauenstein Center, visit hauensteincenter.org. Proposals are due by January 1, 2017.
NAHA encourages members to record oral histories from post-World War II Norwegian immigrants, a group underrepresented in the Association’s archives.

“Hearing the story provides another layer, a deeper and unique insight of Norwegian heritage,” explains NAHA Associate Archivist Jeff Sauve. “The true value of oral history is that it captures life’s nuances that are not often documented in written form.”

Capturing the Voices of Nordic America
An ongoing program to record Norwegian-American oral histories in the Pacific Northwest is the Nordic American Voices Oral History Project sponsored by the Nordic Heritage Museum in Seattle. Volunteer teams travel to cities in Washington to conduct interviews of immigrants from the Nordic countries or their descendants who settled in the Puget Sound area.

“Documenting life is a human impulse. We all have experiences as documentarians in our families and communities. There is a human urge to record, to talk. We need to recognize that and enable others to participate.”

Folklorist Tom Rankin explained in an interview for the Library of Congress’ publication Folklife Center News, “Documenting life is a human impulse. We all have experiences as documentarians in our families and communities. There is a human urge to record, to talk. We need to recognize that and enable others to participate.”

The Norwegian-American Historical Association has recently partnered with Sons of Norway to record oral

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

BY CYNTHIA ELYCE RUBIN

Nowhere is history more illuminating than in personal memory. That is why capturing and preserving oral histories is so important. A person’s own life story lends important clues to the past, creating a timeline to be shared by later generations.

Folklorist Tom Rankin explained in an interview for the Library of Congress’ publication Folklife Center News, “Documenting life is a human impulse. We all have experiences as documentarians in our families and communities. There is a human urge to record, to talk. We need to recognize that and enable others to participate.”

The Norwegian-American Historical Association has recently partnered with Sons of Norway to record oral histories from post-World War II Norwegian immigrants, a group underrepresented in the NAHA archives. Collecting the stories of these more recent immigrants through oral interviews creates original source material for scholars and family historians interested in this immigrant population.

“The true value of oral history is that it captures life’s nuances that are not often documented in written form.”
Sound region. Individuals who lived during World War II under Nazi occupation in Norway and Denmark also recount stories of childhoods disrupted. To date, teams have recorded more than 550 interviews; 100 are transcribed and in a database on the museum’s website.

NAHA member Mari-Ann Kind Jackson, a passionate volunteer for the museum’s oral history project, comes originally from Borkenes, Norway — a tiny village in Kvæfjord about 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle. As a museum docent, Jackson had already worn many hats, but she was immediately hooked on oral history with her introduction to the project in 2009. “It was a perfect fit,” she explains. “It is an absolute privilege to sit in front of someone sharing his or her life story. Often [the interviewee’s] children haven’t heard the whole story, and they are so grateful. It makes me proud to participate in such a potent, heartfelt process, and I love it,” she confides.

The publication of Voices of Ballard and Beyond: Stories of Immigrants and Their Descendants in The Pacific Northwest (2012, Nordic Heritage Museum) was a result of the project and compares stories of emigration from the Nordic countries during three different time periods in the twentieth century. “It also provides an opportunity to re-examine existing notions of the role of storytelling in cultures of displacement, even when such movement may have been voluntary,” writes curator Lizette Graden in the book’s introduction.

To learn more, and to explore transcribed oral histories from the Nordic Heritage Museum, visit nordicmuseum.org/collections/online-collections. For more details about the NAHA oral history program, along with tips and sample questions, visit naha.stolaf.edu/archives/oralhistory.

Cynthia Elyce Rubin is a NAHA board member.

“IT IS AN ABSOLUTE PRIVILEGE to sit in front of someone sharing his or her life story.”

— Mari-Ann Kind Jackson

TIPS FOR ORAL HISTORIES

Interested in conducting an oral history interview? Consider the following:

**QUALIFY** the interviewee by confirming he or she is in adequate physical condition to participate. Make sure the subject is comfortable talking about personal memories.

**INFORM** the subject by explaining how the interview will be used and preserved. Explain where and how the interview will take place. Emphasize the importance of signing a consent form.

**INVITE** the subject to bring mementos, such as photographs or keepsakes. This will provide a launching point or framework for the conversation.

**PREPARE** by doing your homework. Research basic information relating to the subject, such as the location of a hometown in Norway or a list of professional accomplishments.

**TEST** your recording device or video system, and make sure you have enough battery life.

**BEGIN** the interview by asking general questions. Avoid questions that elicit only a yes or no answer. Resist the urge to interrupt.

**ENJOY** the conversation, knowing that you are capturing and preserving history.
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 at naha-archivists@stolaf.edu. Perhaps this list of recent donations will suggest some 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 Canadian materials and in materials that concern the experiences of post-World War II Norwegian immigrants. We welcome donations illustrating all aspects of Norwegian-American history and culture. For guidance on what we collect, please consult the guidelines near the end of the Archives page on the NAHA website: naha.stolaf.edu/archives/guidelines.pdf. Although we aren’t able to acknowledge all donations here, we do appreciate every donation, large and small. Families may be sure that important donations made to the NAHA archives will remain open for future family consultations.

DONATED APRIL 1 – JUNE 30, 2016

FAMILY HISTORIES, MEMOIRS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

• Bowman, Robert E. Papers. Hansen/Gundvaldsen Genealogy compiled by Robert E. Bowman. Two daguerreotype cases with three images, ca. 1858–70, identified as 1) Marie Caspersdatter Rogsrad Hanson, b. 1792 (wife of Amund Hanson); 2) an unidentified daughter of Amund Hanson (possibly Hanna Martine, b. 1818, or Anne Caspara, b. 1819); and 3) an unidentified daughter of Amund Hanson and her five children. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Robert E. Bowman.

• Carlsen, Ivar. “Fifty Years on Seven Seas: A Life On Board ‘The Ship.’” (2015). Sixty-page transcription of oral history conducted and edited by son, Carl Carlsen. Note from Carl: “My father was born in Sandefjord in 1919 and was in the Norwegian merchant marine before and during World War II . . . In his narrative, my father tells how he sought employment on American merchant marine vessels during World War II and after [while based in the Philippines] in order to facilitate his acquiring American citizenship, which he did mid-century. Brooklyn figures into his narrative as a place to be while not at sea during the war and as a place to retain his ties to Norway as a member of the War Sailors Club after his retirement from decades of sailing with Gulf Oil.” Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Carl Carlsen.


• Hasvold, Carol Ann Williams. Warm Remembrances: Essays and Letters (2016). Includes: 1) memories and photographs regarding the Williams and Tillotson families of Rock County, Wisconsin, and Boone County, Illinois; 2) personal stories of several seasons in archeology in Iowa and Israel; 3) narratives of the author’s years as registrar and librarian at the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa; and 4) a brief Wilhelmsen/Williams family genealogy compiled by Anna Williams in the 1970s. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Carol Hasvold.

• Irgens Family Letters. More than 100 letters spanning 1951 to 2008...
from Roar L. Irgens to his mother, Winnie E. Augdahl Irgens, and sister, Ingrid Irgens Johnson, in Norway (several translated). Roar Irgens emigrated from Trondheim in 1950, served in the U.S. Army (1952–54), and later obtained a Ph.D. in microbiology (1963). Irgens taught at the University of Illinois and later at Missouri State University. His experiences involved fieldwork in Antarctica, first at Palmer Station, and the following year at McMurdo Station. Added to P0435 America Letters. Donated by Roar Irgens.


• Lindseth, Elmer I. Lindseth Family History (2014) and correspondence to family members in Hamar, Norway (82 letters spanning 1954 to 1988). Includes chapters regarding parents (Ingvald Bjornhardt Lindseth and Oline Olesdatter Mo) and experiences in the fishing industry (Alaska), the Navy, and the Bethlehem Steel Corporation. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Elmer I. Lindseth.


PHOTOGRAPHS

• Panoramic photograph [framed]. The installation of Rev. N. I. Evenson and the unveiling of Rev. L. P. Thorkveen’s monument at Albion Lutheran Church, Brown County, Minnesota, July 13, 1924 (Photo by C. M. Shelly, Lake Crystal, Minnesota). Added to Photograph Collection P0655. Donated by Irving and Shirley Hagen.

Recent donations include [clockwise, from left] an account of Mary and Martha’s mission in Poulsbo, Wash., a history of the Williams and Tillton families, and courtship letters between Mathea Marie Gunderson and Gilbert Lee.
Norwegian-American politician Knute Nelson is shown campaigning in Watertown, South Dakota, with Theodore Roosevelt, who was then vice presidential candidate. As described in *Norwegian-Yankee: Knute Nelson and the Failure of American Politics, 1860-1923* (NAHA, 1995), this was one of 20 stops made in South Dakota over just four days. Nelson was often upstaged by Roosevelt, except where the population included many Norwegians, according to a reporter cited in the book.

Born in 1842 in Evanger, Norway, Nelson emigrated with his mother in 1849, and they eventually settled in Wisconsin. After serving in the Civil War, Nelson became involved in politics, serving three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, two years as governor of Minnesota, and as a U.S. senator from 1895 until his death in 1923. To read about Nelson’s Civil War letters, visit naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume23/vol23_2.html.