

Norwegian-American Historical Association

Vol 140

Winter 2011



From the NAHA Office to Association Members

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STRATEGIC PLANNING UNDERWAY

NAHA, your organization, has a long and proud tradition of keeping the archives of the Norwegian-American experience, and helping tell that experience through scholarly publications. These two main functions of your organization have been responsible for the high reputation we enjoy and are the things your membership dues or gifts help sustain.

From inception, leaders of this organization faced a variety of challenges to keep this organization growing and moving forward. Through hard work, persistence and a belief in their assignment, those leaders succeeded to a remarkable degree. Today, we continue to see challenges ahead of us as we continue our mission.

For our archives, maintenance of our precious resources is the highest priority. We need to address critical environmental issues regarding archival storage. We need to continue to accept family, church and business records from the past as they are available, and we also recognize the job of collecting must include efforts to catalog contemporary Norwegian-American experiences. Our electronic age makes records more accessible to

all, but also make it more difficult to properly record today's experiences.

Publications in the past have always been in the form of scholarly books. We are working to get our traditional publications process on track. We are also considering how we should move this program forward in the future with more resources moving to the web and with the world of publications constantly changing.

At our April meeting, the Board will be working on a plan to address these strategic issues and others we face. I am grateful we have a diverse group of Board members who represent other Norwegian-American organizations, as well as scholars and people who utilize our resources at the table. As we begin work on our strategic plan, we invite any thoughts and suggestions you might have about where NAHA should head in the future.

Like the leaders in our successful past, all of us on the Board are committed to leaving this organization stronger and better for future generations! Please send your suggestions to:

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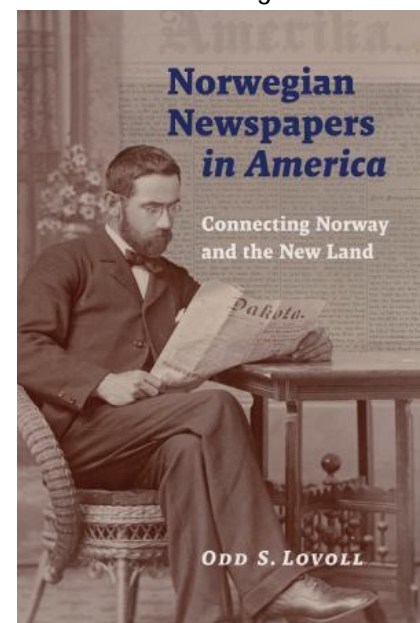
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BOOK EXCERPT - NORWEGIAN NEWSPAPERS

A National Communications Network

for delinquent subscribers to pay up.

Hardships and failures notwithstanding, by 1900 a national interactive Norwegian American press was a functioning reality; small and large journals cited each other, engaged in heated exchanges of opinions, cooperated and created a Norwegian-language journalistic network from coast to coast. The press promoted a sense of a Norwegian America



that stretched from the eastern seaboard, across the Midwestern states and Rocky Mountains, all the way to the Pacific Coast. The many newspapers informed their readers about Norwegians living in other parts of the United States; they carried local news from a wide area. The individual newspapers filled their columns as well with news from the Nordic homelands and other parts of the

"The role of the foreign-language press in general and the Norwegian-language press in particular has held a special scholarly fascination for me since the late 1960s, when I wrote my master's thesis on the Norwegian immigrant press in North Dakota based on the extensive holdings of the Chester Fritz Library at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. The newspapers' yellowing pages printed in Gothic script and archaic Dano-Norwegian linguistic form were intriguing and engrossing sources to the understanding of the immigrant world of bygone days. Their perusal became an engaging and stimulating experience."

-Odd Lovoll, Preface and Acknowledgements, *Norwegian Newspapers in America: Connecting Norway and the New Land*

"It was a foregone conclusion," stated Kenneth Bjork, "that where Norwegians—alone or in combination with Danes—were at all numerous, someone with a bit of capital would organize a publishing company and put out a newspaper in the Danish-Norwegian language". Many journals as a consequence saw the light of day in small and large towns and in large metropolitan areas; most perished very shortly. The least successful ventures were often partisan journals publishing to promote a specific cause or political candidacy. Expectations of success were frequently unrealistic given rival publications and limited numbers of potential subscribers. Means to begin a newspaper might come from supporting groups and individuals, or as the present chapter suggests, were accumulated by immigrant printers, who might in addition to publishing a Norwegian-language journal print other jobs on the side. Success escaped the majority. The initial challenge was to entice subscribers, then to convince them to honor the annual subscription fee. The publishers put forth compelling bonuses for new subscribers, lowered the subscription price, and regularly printed strong editorial urgings

IN AMERICA - BY DR. ODD S. LOVOLL

world, news frequently gleaned from newspapers published in Norway, or from the Yankee press, as it was referred to, and then translated into Dano-Norwegian. The close cooperation between Danish and Norwegian journals, and the many Danes who found employment in ostensibly Norwegian publications, prevent a clear national distinction. The immigrant newspapers were the main source of information for individuals lacking a reading knowledge of English; in addition to local, national, and world news, they gave advice on a great number of issues, responded to questions from their readers, and offered special columns on farming, market prices, and appeals for the assistance of immigrants in need. The newspapers took part in every aspect of the immigrants' lives and came to be considered personal friends. They were distinctly democratic and projected a popular image.

In addition to the so-called Big Three, Skandinaven, Decorah-Posten, and Minneapolis Tidende, regional newspapers rose above failed competitors to become a representative voice. Normanden in North Dakota, Fremad in South Dakota, and Bikuben in Utah are examples of developments in the Norwegian American world of journalism. In the Pacific Northwest Washington Posten secured a prominent position; Minnesota's Duluth Skandinav

and across the bay Superior Tidende in Wisconsin both exercised considerable journalistic influence. On the East Coast Nordisk Tidende surfaced as the major news organ. Other regional newspapers can be included in the list of journals with continuing service for some length. The point, however, is the reality that the Norwegian community in the United States had access to publications in a familiar language wherever they settled.

Reprinted with permission from *Norwegian Newspapers in America: Connecting Norway and the New Land* by Odd S. Lovoll, published by Minnesota Historical Society Press (2010).

DIGITAL ROUND-UP 2011

Leif

Leif is our electronic search engine. It searches most of the collection at the file folder level. It also includes, at the bottom of the search results, index entries for major collections that have been created by volunteer Lee Rokke. Increase your search results by using the Norwegian diacriticals provided on the search screen. Click on a particular result for more detailed "full records." The full record screens can be printed and e-mailed. (The 2001 Guide to the Archives is also available from the Archives web page as a PDF file.)

Norwegian-American Studies

The first 33 published volumes of the Studies were digitized some time ago. They are available in their entirety from the Archives page. They can be examined by volume or by search terms of your choice using the NAHA site search in the left-hand column of the page (just above the ship).

Norwegian-American Newspapers Index

Have you ever wondered where to find the local Norwegian-American papers that your immigrant forebears read? Our index was created by volunteer Dale Haaland and incorporates

data gathered by Prof. Odd Lovoll in preparation for his book, *Norwegian Newspapers in America* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010). You can identify papers by state and town. You can also use the index to connect to three electronic catalogs to find locations for issues of these papers: Bridge (the electronic library catalog used by St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges), WorldCat (a union electronic catalog of most North American academic libraries), and the catalog of the National Library of Norway. And finally, as you will read elsewhere in these pages, St. Olaf is about to begin working on Norwegian papers for its online digital collections at <http://www.stolaf.edu/collections/digital/>. Thank you Jill Strass, St. Olaf digital initiatives and metadata librarian!

Norwegian-American Images

We are now displaying some 200 digital images from the earliest generations of Norwegian settlement in Minnesota and Wisconsin. We have plans to enlarge this collection gradually. You can search the images from their own page (follow the link from the Archives page) or you can simply search for Norwegian-American images with your own web browser and our images should appear in your search results. We do ask that you not reproduce them without our permission;

We thought our newsletter readers might like a round-up of the research aides and digital records that have been created on the Archives page of the NAHA web site. We have been talking about these new search aides and digital collections at meetings of the Board and of the membership, and we have demonstrated how to use them to a number of groups. But members who are unable to attend meetings might not be fully aware of the research options now available at <http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/archives/index.htm>.

We hope you find these useful and enjoyable.

Gary De Krey, Archivist
Jeff Sauve, Associate Archivist

and like most archives, we copy images only upon the payment of reproduction fees. Jill Strass has also been instrumental in helping us put these images online.

Hovland Index and Hovland Map Index

Every Norwegian-American interested in family history has had occasion to consult the Norwegian bygdebøker or community history books. But how do you find these Norwegian-language resources when you know neither the titles nor the authors' names, or which communities are adjacent? Thanks to the work of our volunteer Dale Hovland, we now have two indexes to the NAHA bygdebøker in Rolvaag Library at St. Olaf. The first index searches for books about particular counties and municipalities with words; the second searches with maps. Map searches should prove helpful when boundaries of adjacent areas have changed over time or when families have been spread out between adjacent localities. These indexes were also created with the help of Dale Haaland. Visitors wishing to use bygdebøker in Rolvaag Library will now find most of them on the first floor, rather than in their old location on the fifth floor.

Family history researchers will also find useful resources on the web site of Rolvaag Library. Reference Librarian and Professor

Kris Macpherson has created a bibliographical guide to "Finding Family Members, Farms, and Communities in Norway" at <http://libraryguides.stolaf.edu/NorwegianRoots>. Another guide to "Norwegian Genealogy and History in Rølvaag Memorial Library" can be found at <http://www.stolaf.edu/library/instruction/bibs/norwegenealogy.html>. Finally, a sample of Norwegian-American imprints in the library can be found at <http://www.stolaf.edu/library/libinfo/noramimp/EReligion.html>.

And there is more to come! Dale Haaland has created a general digital index to the Lutheran Herald, 1906-1960, which should appear soon. We have discussed creating an online index to the Rowberg obituaries of Norwegian-Americans as well. With over 250,000 obituaries in that collection, we are talking about a big project that will take several years to complete. We hope to place entries online as we create them, making more and more available as time goes on.

As always, if you should have questions about the search aides and digital collections available from the Archives page of the NAHA web site, please do contact us at naha-archivists@stolaf.edu or 507-786-3229.

“DECEMBER DAYS”

NAHA ARCHIVES IN ACTION

The archive of NAHA is a wonderful place to spend a cold December in Minnesota. It is a place to temporarily forget the outside world and bend over brittle manuscripts, some of them more than a hundred years old. For a good portion of December 2010 I was fortunate to find time to study in the archives, placed in the basement of the Rølvaag library. To someone who is interested in Norwegian-American life and culture it is a must, a place of both study and meditation and eager note taking. The shelves of boxes fill you with awe and a sense of meeting a world of the past, even if the documents originated just a few generations back.

I had been there before, back in the days when Charlotte Jacobsen and Lloyd Hustvedt guided the precious collection. The main purpose of my stay this time was to read Ole E. Rølvaag's manuscripts of *Giants in the Earth*, in the Norwegian original, for a planned scholarly edition of the novel (so far just an electronic edition) which is now being planned in Norway by *Det norske språk- og litteraturselskap* (The Society for Norwegian for Language and Literature). The novel will hopefully be provided with notes and commentaries, notes I would not have been able to produce if it had not been for a chance to read through the original in Rølvaag's own handwriting, pages properly stored and saved in the NAHA archives.



O.E. Rølvaag,
Copyright St. Olaf Archives

Composing the English language edition of *Giants in the Earth* (published in 1927 and today considered to be the standard version of the novel) was a difficult and complicated task in itself, involving a number of people who worked with Rølvaag (1876–1931) on the text. But I had no idea that Rølvaag, in his handwritten original manuscript in Norwegian, changed, crossed out and suggested new sentences. Constantly! He admitted once that he rewrote sections of the novel fifteen times in the original Norwegian version. The final result is a Midwestern classic

about pioneer days, written by an American writer in the Norwegian language. As Rølvaag once said: "I was drawing a picture of the making of America." Luckily he wrote the novel before the time of the computer. Rølvaag could of course not delete his first choice of words but just crossed over words with his pencil, so that the present reader of the manuscript may still see how he worked. It is a privilege indeed to be able to read the original in the NAHA archives.

The archive of NAHA is a tempting place to be. Stephan Greenblatt, the renowned scholar of American New Historicism, once explained his interest in older literature by saying: "It all began with a desire to speak with the dead." If you share that desire, the NAHA archive is a true blessing. There are enough life memories there to even lead you astray from your intended course of study. As I was getting out the boxes of material on Rølvaag, I discovered to my amazement that the church records and the ministerial books of Østen Hanson's Aspelund Church, just southeast of Northfield, had been photocopied and published in book form. I have selected material relating to Østen Hanson for years. He was a leading figure in the Hauge Synod during the 1880s and 90s.

I knew this material existed but I did not know that I could

read and photocopy pages in the NAHA archives. Hanson's Aspelund congregation was just a few hundred yards across the field from Muus' Holden Church. The records, in Norwegian, provide us with pieces of American church history, voices of the dead, which are now read by just a few. They include stories of some who were ready to leave Muus and enter the Hanson's Haugean congregation. One would think that they were welcomed and needed in a much smaller congregation, but their faith was ardently scrutinized by the Haugeans before they could be accepted. The whole book is full of practical arrangement like who was to get, pay for, sew, and hang new curtains in the church and how much that would cost, next to passages of fierce theological debate on the meaning of grace. You met immigrants and their families and their concern for religion on every page.

As I left the NAHA archives late in a cold December afternoon it was like both Ole Rølvaag and Østen Hanson had spoken to me.

Oyvind T. Gulliksen
Professor emeritus,
Telemark University College
Author of *Twofold Identities*
(New York, 2004)

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FROM THE FRONT DESK By Jackie Henry

Over the past several weeks I've had the pleasure of reading Dr. Odd Lovoll's book, "Norwegian Newspapers in America", a portion of which is excerpted in this edition of the newsletter. In addition to being a comprehensive survey of Norwegian language newspapers in America, the book vividly reflects the myriad of cultural, political and social influences felt by the Norwegian immigrant population. Political viewpoints ranged on a continuum from the conservative to the populist to the socialist; religious debates were prevalent and often heated; urban, rural and small town populations each espoused a unique viewpoint.

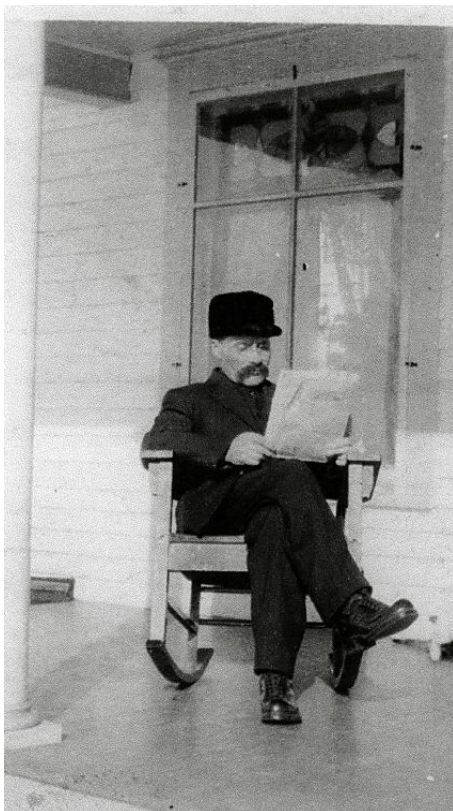
In a way, NAHA is no different. Our members join for a wide range of reasons. Scholars join for access to the archives, opportunities for publishing, and for our scholarly works; family historians join to access our genealogical resources, both human and paper; enthusiasts of all things Norwegian join us for the opportunity to learn about Norwegian history on both sides of the ocean. As we lay out our programming plans for the year, we try to touch on all of these interests and avocations.

Toward that end, you will see new NAHA scholarly publications issued this year, and I will try to devote a portion of each newsletter to highlighting new materials published elsewhere which would be of interest to our membership.

We are assisting NAHA-Norge with the upcoming conference "Migrant Journeys: The Norwegian-American Experience in a Multi-Cultural Context", to be held at Luther College in Decorah from June 14th to 17th, and we were recently notified that King Harald V and Queen Sonja will be visiting the St. Olaf College campus on October 14th. As plans for their visit become more solidified in the coming months, we will coordinate an event for NAHA members to join in this festive occasion. In addition, I hope to bring NAHA to the various stevne meetings held in the area. We will announce all events on the front page of our website (www.naha.stolaf.edu) and in our newsletters.

We also want to reach out to our members beyond the Midwest. Is there an event in your area you think fellow NAHA members would find particularly interesting? Do you have a lead on a local lecture or museum event in which we could assist with publicity to our members? Are there scholars in your midst who would be interested in publishing material related to Norwegian-American immigrant topics? Are you willing to host a NAHA event in your area? We are happy to assist in all of these endeavors, as we work to build awareness of all that NAHA has to offer.

Jackie Henry
NAHA Administrative Director



*My great-grandfather Ludvig Paulson,
homesteader in rural Plaza, North
Dakota*

BOOK REVIEW - CULTURE AND CUSTOMS OF NORWAY

By Todd Nichol

Our interest in the Norwegian-American Historical Association is primarily with the immigrant experience. It is, however, important for us occasionally to take note of studies of contemporary Norway. In the case of Margaret Hayford O'Leary's *Culture and Customs of Norway* we have three good reasons to do so. First, the author is a stalwart, longtime member of the Association well known to many readers of our newsletter. Second, this is a very fine book. Third, a sharpened sense of modern Norway will give those interested in the history of immigration a fuller awareness of how very different late nineteenth and early twentieth century Norway was from the nation of the present.

Many of the immigrants who left Norway in the nineteenth century knew a song that began this way:

Farewell, Norway, and God bless thee.

*Stern and sever thou wert always,
But as a mother I honor thee,
Even though thou skimped my bread.*

If the immigrants who sang this song, could return to Norway in the present, they would be startled, indeed. They would find it a wealthy land to which more immigrants come than emigrants leave. What has changed?

Margaret Hayford O'Leary's book *Culture and Customs of Norway* is

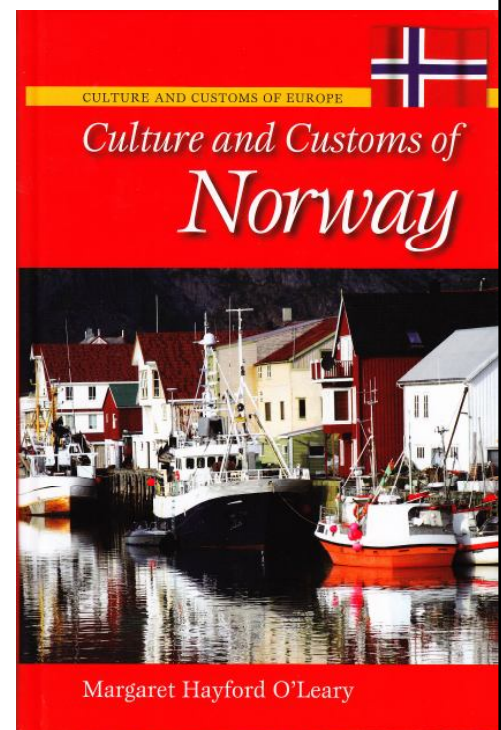
the place to go to find out. Readers will quickly discover that the author is not only well informed but that she writes with the awareness and critical sympathy of someone who has been much in Norway over long periods of time. Opening chapters traverse topics traditional to a book like this including geography, history, politics, and religion. The strength of the book here is that these chapters are not only based on solid research, but that they are briskly up-to-date. Succeeding chapters cover a variety of social and cultural patterns. Final chapters offer an extended look at creativity and the arts in Norway.

One book on contemporary Norway to read, to recommend to a friend, or to give to someone seeking to get acquainted with modern Norway? This is the book.

- Todd Nichol, NAHA Editor



Margaret Hayford O'Leary, *Culture and Customs of Norway*. Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Press, 2010.





**Norwegian-American
Historical Association**

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NYGAARD GRANT SUPPORTS NORWEGIAN NEWSPAPER IMAGING

St. Olaf College is pleased to announce that Jill Strass, Digital Initiatives and Metadata Librarian was awarded a \$30,250 Nygaard Foundation grant to digitize the St. Olaf Library holdings of Norwegian American newspapers that date back to the late 19th century. The Nygaard Foundation provides funding and support for activities and projects that benefit the mission of St. Olaf College. Digitizing Norwegian American newspapers will nurture an appreciation of the Norwegian heritage of St. Olaf College and will help preserve the history of

the Norwegian immigrants for future generations.

The grant's goal is to digitize 25,000 pages of Norwegian American Newspapers, some of which are owned by NAHA and held by the Rolvaag Library. The grant award will allow for the purchase of equipment and student hours for the digitization effort.

The grant funded work is a 2 stage process: the first stage is to digitize 25,000 pages of a Norwegian American newspaper to be completed by May of 2012; the

second stage is to provide on-line, web-based access. The grant will provide support for only the first stage. The Library will continue to seek out funding to complete the entire project. Jill anticipates starting to scan the papers during the summer of 2011. They have some technical issues to work through, but it is possible they could provide some access in the fall of 2011 as the newspapers are digitized. If the technical issues require additional funding to resolve, access may be delayed until such funding can be found.