Greetings from Norway! This semester I am participating in a faculty exchange that has my family and me living in Bø, Telemark. It has been quite an experience, given the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

During my time here, migration has been on my mind in several ways.

First, as a human being: My family and I have been migrants these past six months. We have traversed boundaries and borders, struggled to adapt to a new place with a language and culture different than our own, and settled into our new lives and our new selves. We have also felt the acute worry of being far from loved ones and our home as a global crisis broke out. We have experienced the uncertainty and precariousness of our situation as foreigners. An American friend spending the semester in Malta was told when she went to buy groceries in early March that due to the dwindling supply of food reaching the island, they would only be selling food to Maltese. Through these experiences, we have felt more connected to the migrants of our time and the migrants of the past.

Second, as a teacher: I am teaching a course on the history of industrialization at the University of Southeast Norway. While teaching the class, I have been acutely aware of the entwined histories of industrialization and emigration in Norway. We can think of the out-migration of a large proportion of Norway’s working-age population in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in two ways as it relates to industrialization. Some consider emigration an impediment to Norway’s economic growth that had to be overcome, while others argue that emigration acted as a demographic pressure valve, allowing the Norwegian government to concentrate its resources and advance economically. The debate as to the negative and positive outcomes of emigration is vast.

Last, as an editor: I hope you were as pleased as I was to receive the first issue of the redesigned and revamped Norwegian-American Studies in your mailbox at the end of last year. As this newsletter goes to print, I am hard at work editing this year’s issue of the journal, which will be focused on the topic of war in the 20th century. I look forward to sharing it with you in a few months.

Anna M. Peterson, NAHA Editor
PUBLIC HISTORY INTERNS ARE A FIRST AT NAHA

NAHA partnered with the St. Olaf College history department this spring to create the department’s first public history internships. Five history majors were selected for the pilot program (read about them below). They gained hands-on archival experience, assisting NAHA Archivist Kristina Warner in rethinking several significant NAHA collections.

The term “public history” describes a range of activities that generally happen outside of academic settings. Public history is sometimes called “applied history.” Public historians tend to engage more directly with the public than academic historians do, working to shed light on present-day issues or to help a community understand and share its own history. The field emerged as a movement among historians in the United States and Canada in the 1970s. It is rooted in archival science and oral history.

St. Olaf’s new six-course public history program (read about them below) requires completing an internship. The internships were cut short left campus due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During their two months at NAHA, however, the interns reviewed several archival collections. They created finding aids for them and highlighted important documents to consider for digitization. On the NAHA Archives Instagram account, they shared some of the items they found most interesting.

“I am so thankful to these students for dedicating their time to help NAHA, and making the launch of this internship so successful.” Warner says. “They learned that archives are a fun place, full of hidden information,” she adds. “Students are often afraid to touch materials, but I hope this internship can break down those barriers to allow students to feel comfortable with researching in any archive.”

Hahn believes the two months were impactful: “Sometimes the lessons that ‘stick’ most happen outside of the classroom.”

HOW COVID-19 HAS IMPACTED NAHA

Institutions everywhere adapted to extraordinary circumstances this spring and NAHA is no exception. As this issue of Currents is being prepared, it’s difficult to predict when our normal work routines will resume. Stay tuned to our website, naha.stolaf.edu, and Facebook page for updates. Here is a summary of the changes we’ve made in response to the pandemic.

Archives temporarily closed—The NAHA archives are closed to the public and our staff will be working primarily from home through the summer. However, we are available to answer questions and offer assistance by email. Watch our website for updates on when we can safely reopen.

Spring member event cancelled; presentation online—We cancelled our April 30 gathering in Minneapolis.

Summer tour cancelled; possibly rescheduled in 2021—The Artistry and Industry tour of Norway, scheduled for June 21–28, is cancelled. We hope to offer a similar tour in June 2021. Our sister organization, NAHA-Norge, has postponed its triennial seminar until next June.

Biennial meeting still tentatively on for October—Watch your mailbox and inbox for updates about the 2020 biennial member meeting, October 24 at St. Olaf College in Minnesota.

Thanks to all who provide stability to the association during these challenging times of closed doors and disrupted programming. Your membership and support make all the difference. To make a gift, use the enclosed envelope or visit naha.stolaf.edu.

PUBLIC HISTORY INTERNS

RYLEIGH BEERS, ’20
ART HISTORY/HISTORY

CLaire DREWES, ’22
PHILOSOPHY/HISTORY

Audrey Hoechner, ’23
Environmental Studies/History

Chloe Joy, ’21
History/Women’s and Gender Studies

Alyssa Moore, ’21
History/English

FOCUS: Records of the NAHA secretary, beginning in 1925
“I’ve loved my time with NAHA. I have recently discovered my passion for paper and book conservation, and my time with NAHA has allowed me to explore that passion. With NAHA, I have been able to dig through early secretarial records of the association and create searchable terms that will help patrons with their research.”

FOCUS: Ole E. Rølvaag papers
“I learned firsthand about Professor Rølvaag and the times in which he lived by exploring the wide variety of documents found in each box and labeling them accordingly. I enjoyed the unpredictability of what I would discover each day, whether it be a family postcard or a draft of Giants in the Earth.”

FOCUS: Camp Little Norway papers
“I first and foremost acquired important hands-on experience and learned a great deal about the processing and cataloging of historical materials. Along the way, I was able to learn many interesting facts and figures connected to Norwegian efforts during the Second World War.”

FOCUS: Collections related to the Deaconess Hospitals
“I was able to expand my own skills in reprocessing files and working with archived documents, while also learning about very interesting topics that enriched my time as an intern. I’m really grateful for the friends and connections I’ve made while working with NAHA, and the experience I’ve gained.”

FOCUS: Civil War and Ole E. Rølvaag papers
“I was excited to be processing and cataloging the Ole Rølvaag Collection.… While Rølvaag’s letters contain the more mundane aspects of his life as an educator and author, his correspondence also underscores his engagement with issues such as the place of Norwegian culture in American life, the art of writing and translating, church affairs, state and national politics, and immigration history.”

Spring presenter Terje Joranger

However, guest speaker Terje Joranger, director of the Norwegian Emigrant Museum in Ottestad, Norway, agreed to share his presentation in an online event May 14. Watch for an archived version to be made available on the NAHA website.
Census records from Norway can be of great value in genealogical research. The most complete information is found in a nominative census, which is countrywide and includes names and other data for the entire population. Keep in mind that spellings of people’s names, place names, professions, and other details can vary in Norway based on time and place.

Several websites facilitate searches of Norwegian census records. Norway’s Digital Archives (digitalarkivet.no/en/content/) provide access to transcribed records and scans of the original handwritten records. The Norwegian Historical Data Centre at the University of Trondheim (dbh.uib.no/nhdc/census.html) offers a helpful primer on each census taken in Norway’s history, noting the unique features of the data that were gathered each time. Links on the site enable you to search the census records.

Ancestry.com also provides searches of Norway’s nominative censuses. Ancestry requires a paid subscription for access from a personal computer, but many public libraries make Ancestry available for patrons to use at no cost on library computers.

These data are similar to what was collected in 1865. Instead of a person’s age, however, the birth year is given.

Translations and explanations of the abbreviations used in Norway’s 1865 through 1900 censuses can be found at homepages.rootsweb.com/~norway/census_abbreviations.htm.

Above: The 1865 and 1875 censuses included details not only about the people living on a farm, but about the farm itself. In this transcribed record from Norway’s Digital Archives, the quantities of seed sown in spring 1865 and the holdings of livestock are shown in abbreviated form: 2 four-bushel barrels of bygg, or barley, and 2 barrels of potatoes; 1 horse, 9 cows, 3 sheep, and 9 goats.

NORWAY’S 19TH CENTURY CENSUS RECORDS

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Translations and explanations of the abbreviations used in Norway’s 1865 through 1900 censuses can be found at homepages.rootsweb.com/~norway/census_abbreviations.htm.
In 1938, Sovik joined the staff of St. Olaf College as assistant dean of men and head resident of Ytterboe Hall. He began teaching in the Department of Religion in 1939. By late summer 1941, Sovik sensed it was only a matter of time before the U.S. would enter the war, and he thought he would best serve his country as a military chaplain.

Ordained in October 1941 at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Northfield, he received his Navy commission as a lieutenant (junior grade) in April 1942, then departed for Bain training school at Norfolk, Virginia. He was attached to the First Marine Division in South Carolina after training. From there, he traveled by train to California, then by ship to New Zealand, and eventually to a four-and-a-half-month ordeal on Guadalcanal.

**“Just a Line of Greeting”** Following the savage Battle of the Tenaru on Guadalcanal on August 21, 1942, Sovik penned a letter on August 30 to his friend, Thompson. The opening read: “Just a line of greeting this peaceful Sunday evening. It can’t be more than just a greeting, for we can’t tell much about what goes on here.” As an officer, Sovik understood the strict military censorship code, keeping his missive to simple highlights of his welfare and the weather, noting, “The island is beautiful. He could not write then about the island. Sovik leading a scouting party to the island. Many U.S. newspapers ran this photo of Sovik leading a worship service at Talasea on the island in New Britain, Papua New Guinea, in 1944. A Marine Corps correspondent described the scene and title for Marines on the island.

In subsequent letters to family and friends, 28-year-old Sovik briefly mentioned he lost his fine silver altar set and everything else that he had—“I can perhaps tell you some day.” Many years later, Sovik recounted in his unpublished memoir, “Trying to Remember,” what had transpired when landing on Guadalcanal.

He was aboard the transport ship USS George F. Elliott when it was attacked by enemy aircraft on August 8, just more than eight months after the surprise assault on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese.

With the Elliott on fire, the marines quickly evacuated to shore with only the clothes on their backs. Sovik wrote, “Everything I had went to the bottom—communion materials, devotional materials of all kinds, all my pictures of Muriel [his fiancé], my clothes!” The ship sank when an enemy dive-bomber plunged into a hold and exploded.

In his memoir, Sovik also touches upon a major encounter with the enemy in the early morning hours on August 21: “The 2nd battalion, to which I was attached, was guarding the west flank of our troops, along the Tenaru River, not really a river, but a stream so dry that there was a sand spit just before it entered the ocean.” The Marines named it Alligator Creek, although in reality the alligators found were crocodiles.

“About a.m., the Japanese attacked. They ran into a single barbed wire our troops had put up,” Sovik wrote. “The fighting was fierce, the Japanese charging in without stopping, our men firing as fast as they could.” It was so intense that Sovik would never forget what he witnessed. He was behind the line of fighting assisting 27-year-old Lieutenant Jacques Saphier, the battalion’s medical officer. When a Japanese mortar landed near the aid station, the two men immediately hit the ground.

“My God, they got me!” Saphier screamed, falling on top of Sovik. The doctor was mortally wounded. Sovik was unhurt, but Saphier died the next day. They had no sleeping bags or blankets, only the clothes on their backs. About 700 men immediately hit the ground.

“We lost 54 men.” As the battalion’s chaplain, he helped bury the U.S. soldiers the following day. “It was the largest single group I had at a funeral.”

**“Paper is So Scarce”** While stationed on Guadalcanal over the next several months, Sovik sent numerous letters home, often touching upon duty and daily experiences. On September 7, 1942, he stated: “It’s surprising how simple life can become mainly trying to keep alive, getting something to eat and having cigarettes to smoke. Simple joys are much appreciated and we all lose much of our sophistication.”

He related how the contents of a can of sweet peaches were relished by him and fellow officers, who ate with their hands and licked their fingers, and told about when a fresh egg was served for breakfast, the first since arriving three months earlier. That evening, supper featured fresh meat. “It was almost too much for us to handle that day, but we had to eat it right away before it got rotten. In this climate nothing keeps.”

Sovik felt his job was not clearly defined, except for services on Sunday. Wherever he was needed he inserted himself unselfishly, whether it was strictly “spiritual” or not. His tireless acts were alluded to in letters. “I want to write you both, but paper is so scarce that I’m forced to send a letter for you to share,” lamented Sovik on September 23 in a correspondence to Thompson and St. Olaf College President Lars W. Boe. Without stationery on the island, Sovik spearheaded a paper drive to collect anything usable so that the soldiers could write home.

He sought out camp cooks willing to peel the labels off of seized Japanese tin cans. Anything would do—scraps of paper held together by bits of cardboard, coffee containers, both sides of envelopes left by the enemy, and wrapping paper. Once ready for mailing, Sovik handed over 200 “letters” to a pilot, who transported the whole batch to a postal center for processing. To ensure it was the largest single group he had at a funeral.

**“By 7 A.M., TWO HOURS BEFORE SERVICES, THE THATCHED CHAPEL WAS ALMOST FILLED WITH FRESHLY SHAVED MARINES...”**

Sovik attached the following message, “I Baptized a Man,” to a postal center for processing. To encourage delivery of the improvised mail, which lacked proper envelopes, a pilot attached to his letter for mailing.

“This Sovik “chit” was typical of the so-called sympathy chits that military chaplains handed out to offer moral support to the troops in their care.

Many U.S. newspapers ran this photo of Sovik leading a worship service at Talasea on the island in New Britain, Papua New Guinea, in 1944. A Marine Corps correspondent described the scene and title for Marines on the island.

**“Marines Write on Scraps.”** Shortly before leaving Guadalcanal, Sovik wrote a four-page letter on December 13, 1942, to Gertrude Hilleboe, dean of women at St. Olaf.

“I Baptized a Man” He wrote with humor amidst adversity. “You can’t imagine what an addition I got the other day—half of a sponge-rubber truck seat, and by just wrapping the lounging jacket around it at night I have a fine pillow! It’s a great improvement over nothing… I’ll soon be the envy of my men. I got a ride down to a river with the colonel. We get down quite regularly and it’s a fast-flowing river, so the water is beautifully clear. It’s certainly a godsend to have good, fresh water like that. Doing my

**“Military details would be censored, so Sovik described day-to-day existence.”** It’s surprising how simple life can get, mainly trying to keep alive, getting something to eat, and having cigarettes to smoke.”

**“I Baptized a Man, Right Beside His Foxhole Using As Much of the Ritual Service As I Remembered.”**
world war II in the NAHA archives

Here is a sampling of items in our collections that are available for members and other researchers to view. Learn more about them by looking up their entries in the Leef database of NAHA collections on our website, at naha.stolaf.edu/archives/. NAHA continues to add WWII-era materials to the archives. If you have something to contribute, please contact Archivist Kristina Warner at naha-archivist@stolaf.edu.

A collection of papers from American Relief for Norway, Inc., contains the records of that association, which was incorporated 10 days after the invasion of Norway by Germany. Records show the challenge of collecting, buying, storing, and transporting supplies of food, clothing, and medication to Norway, and how the group coordinated with governments and relief agencies.

An unpublished autobiography of M. Mikael Granum tells of growing up on a farm near Mjøsa in Norway and joining the Norwegian Merchant Marine. Granum was in England when Norway was invaded by Germany. Ending up in Minnesota, he joined the U.S. Army and participated in the Battle of the Bulge and the liberation of Buchenwald during WWII. Visiting his family in Norway after the war, he learned that one of his brothers had been a collaborator with the Germans.

Love, Hilma: Letters Home and Family Stories from a First-Generation American and World War II Nurse, by Karen A. Lindesmith, is the published biography of Hilma Granum (married to Mikael), and tells of her time in the U.S. Army Corps and later as a nursing instructor at Fairview Hospital in Minneapolis.

Eldin Madland’s autobiography gives an account of his work with the Norwegian Resistance and the British military during the war.

always on the way: the autobiography of Sigrid Hellessen Lund (1892–1987). tells of her efforts to rescue Jewish children from the Holocaust, and her work for peace before and after the war.

Collections of “wwii papers” and “norway in world war II papers” include many letters, news clippings, scrapbooks, occupation humor, and a set of 54 slides showing King Haakon VII’s return to Norway in June 1945.

Significant additions to the archives from recent months are listed below. Although we aren’t able to acknowledge all donations here, we do appreciate every donation. We also welcome your help in building the NAHA archives. Materials illustrating all aspects of Norwegian-American history and culture are of interest. NAHA collection guidelines are available online at the “archives” page of our website, naha.stolaf.edu/archives/guidelines.pdf. Please contact the archives at naha-archivist@stolaf.edu with your questions.

Donated January – March 2020

Manuscripts and Published Material


• Luther Academy: A Memorial History, 1888–1920, by Bert H. Narveson. Published 1951. Luther Academy was in Albert Lea, Minnesota. Added to P576 Pamphlet collection. Donated by Karen Everett, member.


• Asmund Hvidston papers, circa 1911. Handwritten recipes, notes, and other materials. Hvidston was born in 1877 in Sandevar, Norway. In 1911, she emigrated with her daughters, Esther and Eldrid, and settled in Brooklyn, New York, with her husband, Theodore Thorwaldsen, a ship captain who had emigrated two years earlier. Also included is a book titled Norge i Våre Hjerter by Nordahl Greig, published 1929. Inside the cover of this book is a handwritten letter, possibly from King Haakon of Norway. Addition: NAHA 2020/001. Donated by Wendy Minshall.


• A 1903 journal kept by Ella Hennings as she accompanied her brother and sister-in-law to California.

• P. A. Henning family history, circa 1903. Journal of Ella Hennings, a resident of Goodhue County, Minnesota, from her travels west in June 1903 with her brother Louis (Lars) and his bride, Jenny, on their honeymoon. Transcription included. Addition: NAHA 2019/783. Donated by Judy Aaker.

Records of Organizations

Signed portrait of Thor (Wilhelm) Steinert, a Royal Norwegian Air Force pilot stationed at Camp Little Norway in Ontario, Canada, during the Second World War. Camp Little Norway, known officially as Flyvåpnenes Treningsleir, was a training site for more than 2,500 Norwegian airmen during the course of the war. Dogs were common in the camp for supporting military efforts as well as boosting morale. Famously, this included Bamse the St. Bernard, the heroic mascot of the Free Norwegian Forces, who was known for breaking up fights among crewmates by putting his paws on their shoulders to calm them down.