in brief

A MYSTERY IN THE ARCHIVES

Former NAHA Associate Archivist Jeff Sauve retired from that post in 2018, but he hasn’t left the NAHA collections behind. In fact, Sauve has spent much of the past 10 years investigating the story behind a single item from the archives. In 2012, a curious headline on an 1894 news clipping from the Duluth Tribune caught his eye: “Is All a Mystery.” The article described what was billed as “the crime of the century” in 1894. The body of a young woman had been discovered on the sandy shore of Minnesota Point in Duluth. “There is no doubt in the mind of the authorities that the woman, whoever she may be, was murdered,” the article stated. Her remains were displayed publicly for two weeks in hopes of learning her identity. After her burial in an unmarked pauper’s grave, she eventually was identified, as Lena Olson, a young woman born in Stoughton, Wisconsin, to Norwegian immigrants.

In Murder at Minnesota Point: Unraveling the Captivating Mystery of a Long-Forgotten True Crime, Sauve chronicles the murder investigation over the next two years, as city detectives pursued numerous suspects and the manhunt captivated the nation. The Gilded Age economy of the 1890s relied upon the labor of immigrants and their families. Women were often employed in domestic service, and they were marginalized in society due to their perceived lower status, according to Sauve. “I set out to honor Lena, who was a domestic servant, as well as other forgotten immigrant women,” he says. Some of the proceeds from book sales will be used to purchase a memorial for Lena Olson’s unmarked grave.

Sauve credits NAHA volunteer Dale Howland for years of “first-rate” research assistance. “His services were invaluable” Sauve says in the book’s acknowledgments.

JUNE NORWAY TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

NAHA offered its week-long Artistry and Industry of Norway tour in June. (The tour was preceded by a NAHA-Norge seminar at the Norwegian Emigrant Museum in Ottestad, Norway; read more about that on the facing page.) Travelers went from Oslo to Bergen by bus, staying in historic hotels and exploring the cultural, industrial, and agricultural history of southern Norway. Stops included Oslo’s new Munch Museum and Deichmann Jævlik Library; Heddal Stave Church; the Rjukan-Notodden Industrial Heritage Site; the TELEMARK Canal; fish and fruit farms in the Hardanger region; the Oleans knitwear factory; and Trollhaugen, the home of composer Edvard Grieg. NAHA Editor Anna Peterson guided the tour, Executive Director Amy Boxrud served as host.

“Such a well-planned trip was delightful,” said one participant. “I learned a lot and saw many places that were new to me. I also made many new friends.”

See photos on next page. More are available at facebook.com/NorwegianAmericanHistoricalAssociation.
**JUNE TOUR HIGHLIGHTS**

1) The group enjoyed dinner and an overnight at the historic Hotel Dalen.  
2) At Telemarkshire, visitors could try making elements of traditional silver jewelry. 
3) Norwegian cuisine and good conversation capped each day. 
4) NAHA Executive Director Amy Boreuli (left) and Editor Anna Peterson planned and led the tour.

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**REMEMBERING LOIS RAND**

Lois Rand, past president of NAHA, died May 24, 2022, at 96. She was born in 1925 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. She earned a bachelor’s and master of arts degree in music at Colorado College. Rand worked as a teacher, writer, musician, and conductor, and was minister of music at First Lutheran Church in St. Paul. She was also vice president of Minda Humphrey, and John Tunheim. Rand kept a detailed journal (below) while with the NAHA archives in 2018.

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**SMALLPOX AND NORWAY’S INOCULATION CERTIFICATES**

**By Dale Hovland**

Smallpox has eradicated, but for centuries, the infection began with a fever, then a rash that turned into ugly lesions and scabs. The death rate was high, “perhaps 40 percent” of those who were infected, wrote Øivind Larsen, professor emeritus of medical history at the University of Oslo, in a 2015 article about smallpox in Norway.

Those who survived had permanent scars on their faces and bodies. But for the rest of their lives, they were immune to the highly contagious disease, which spread primarily through exhaled droplets.

Norway required people to be inoculated against smallpox beginning in 1810. Frederik VI, king of Denmark and Norway, issued an ordinance on April 3 that year. A way to protect against the disease had been proven by British physician Edward Jenner in 1796: namely, inoculation with a milder relative of smallpox called cowpox. Frederik’s ordinance required people to have proof of such inoculation or proof of natural immunity gained through falling ill with smallpox. Without one or the other, they could not be confirmed or married, and they could not gain work as apprentices.

NAHA member Dale Haaland wrote a 1987 article, *Cowpox Inoculation Certificate* (shown and translated on this page), that was his grand-grandfather Edward Svendsen’s. It demonstrates how the certificates are useful to family historians.

Inoculation certificates were preprinted, with blanks for the vaccinator to fill in by hand. To be complete, certificates also had to be signed by the parish priest. In the translation below, underlined text represents handwritten information.

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**Cowpox Inoculation Certificate**

This certificate, which shall be given without payment, should be presented to the appropriate parish minister within six weeks after receipt.

Edvard Svensen Valstad born in Giesdal, Parish of parents: Brand Svends and Christine Thordalson. Valstad and living in the same parish. He was 1-year-old, was by me, the undersigned, in the undersigned year 1847 the 24th of September inoculated with cowpox. By precise inspection between the 7th and 9th days after the inoculation, I have found all of the indications that show them to be the genuine cowpox: that is, they were whole and undamaged, filled with a clear fluid, in the middle of Oslo, in a 2015 article on smallpox in Norway. It shows Edvard, a 19-year-old carpenter at the time, living with his parents and five siblings on a farm in Høyland Parish, Rogaland.

The certificate also shows where Edvard was inoculated (Lye Parish, Rogaland) and at what age (one). That helps in finding records of him in the parish church books: his birth on November 6, 1846, his confirmation on October 13, 1861. His confirmation record notes that he has been vaccinated, by whom, and on what date. Some Norwegian church books, including those for Lye Parish, have a separate section specifically for recording inoculations. Edvard’s entry there matches the details shown on his certificate.

The church book for Høyland Parish, where Edvard lived later, includes a section listing “Departures from the parish.” Edward Svensen Haaland, his wife, and six children departed on April 17, 1866, the book says. Their inoculation certificates were most likely with them when they left Norway on their voyage to America.
A DIFFERENT JOURNEY

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO 20TH CENTURY NORWEGIAN IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S.

BY DENISE LOGELAND

O merciful God, today Norway’s coasts vanished before our eyes,” wrote a woman from the Hallingdal region of Norway in an 1862 journal entry amid her voyage to America. “Now I shall never again see my beloved native land.” Historian Ingrid Semmingsen used Gro Svendsen’s journal entry to make a point: “Like the other emigrants of that period, she knew that her decision was final. The emigrants of 1900 did not have to think so.”

Just four decades had passed since Svendsen left Norway, but already the journey was easier to make in 1900. Fares on passenger ships were more affordable relative to wages. There were more rail connections in both countries. Those who left Norway for America at the start of the 20th century did not necessarily see themselves leaving forever. “They wished to try something different when conditions were bad at home; they wanted to see a larger society, to try their luck on this new international labor market,” Semmingsen wrote in Norwegian-American Studies. A History of the Migration. “They assumed that if they were unlucky, there would always be a boat going home.”

And later, an airplane.

Compare the experience of Gro Svendsen with that of Jenny Solaas, who emigrated in 1947 from Lista in southern Norway’s Agder County. By the early 2000s, Solaas was living in Agder County again, having moved back after 50-plus years in New York. Historian Siv Ringdal wrote in Norwegian-American Studies in 2020 that Solaas lived initially in Brooklyn, worked as a housekeeper, married, and then opened her own business. She visited Norway during her years away, and after she and her husband moved back there, she made annual trips to New York to see relatives and friends, and to shop.

Waves of mass migration from Norway to the United States were mostly a 19th century phenomenon that flowed into the early 20th century. But the U.S. began to put tight limits on immigration in the 1920s. For that reason and others—the Great Depression, wars, the push and pull of stronger economic opportunity in one country and then the other—the number of Norwegians immigrating annually to the U.S. subsided to a trickle.

In the 20th century, the scale and experience of Norwegian migration changed tremendously from what it had been in the 19th century, and the nature of the migrating population changed, too. On these pages, the words of historians and data experts provide a window into those changes. At NAHA, a new endowed research fellowship invites further exploration of 20th century Norwegian immigration to the U.S. using the association’s collections. Read more about it at naha.stolaf.edu/archives/research.

WHERE DID THE IMMIGRANTS GO?

A: “The 1920 census established the United States as a nation of city dwellers, as for the first time more than 50 percent of its people were counted among the urban population. Despite their enduring reputation as the most rural of immigrant groups, Norwegians joined the migration to American cities. By the end of the 1920s, some 47 percent of Norwegian immigrants and their children were to be found in the urban populations.”

Q: WHERE DID THE IMMIGRANTS GO?

A: “People emigrated not only to the U.S.A. At the start of the 1900s, Canada received 5 percent of the emigration, and at the end of the 1920s, one-third went there.”


Q: HOW MANY NORWEGIANS LEFT FOR THE UNITED STATES IN THE 1900S?

A: Statistics Norway, the bureau that produces the country’s official statistics, has data to answer this question, but with gaps and caveats.

• Because of the disruption of World War II and a post-war transition in how migration data were collected, Norway lacks data on emigrants by country of destination for much of the 1940s and 1950s.

• Emigration numbers from the early 1800s through 1948 come from information collected by Norwegian police at the country’s ports. Those figures could include some Swedish emigrants who left for the United States via Norway.

• Norway’s immigration and emigration records of the past five decades are governed by a 1970 law that defines a resident of Norway as anyone who comes to the country to stay for six months or more. It defines an emigrant as a resident of Norway who leaves the country with the intention of staying abroad for six months or more.

Norwegians Immigrating to the U.S. 1900s–2000s

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SOURCE: STATISTICS NORWAY

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SOURCE: STATISTICS NORWAY
1) Ships carried Norwegians to North America well into the 20th century, but in the years after World War II, flying was also a common way for immigrants to arrive. In this December 1956 ad from the Scandinavian-American newspaper, the Scandinavian airline SAS promoted its immigrant fares.

2) In April 1961, SAS officials were in New York to celebrate the launch of a new direct flight to the city from Oslo.

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**Q: WHO WERE THE 20TH CENTURY MIGRANTS WHO LEFT NORWAY?**

**A:** “[From 1865 to 1915], family emigration was largely replaced by individual emigration of the young and unmarried.”

—Ingrid Semmingsen, Norway to America, A History of Migration

**A:** “From the 1930s on, the percentage of married men increased … the earlier labor movement of young people was over ….”

—Odd Lovoll, The Promise of America

**A:** “Post World War II saw a changed pattern of immigration, as Norwegians among other nationalities moved … to take white-collar jobs, not always intending to stay for extended lengths of time.”

—Lars Ibsen, “Threatening Emigration Early in the Century” (Statistics Norway/adb.no)

**A:** “From the 1900s to 1925, the Norwegian government kept statistics … on the reasons for the emigrants’ leaving the homeland.”

**Lack of access to profitable occupations** 170,000

**Hired or seeking hire abroad** 6,200

**To join families** 36,800

**Other motives** 2,100

**Total** 215,100


**A:** “The Great Depression prompted 32,000 Norwegians in America to return to their homeland; return migration was closely related to business cycles, to good or bad times, on both sides of the Atlantic. Official Norwegian statistics indicate that between 1891 and 1940, as many as a quarter of all emigrants to America after 1881 resettled in Norway.”

—Odd Lovoll, The Promise of America

**A:** “From the 1890s and up to the mid-1960s, the two counties [East and West Agder, now a single county called Agder] had the highest level of overseas migrants per capita in Norway. In … Lista, for instance, one-fourth of the population worked or had been working in America in 1910, and in 1920 this had increased to one-third of the population. A characteristic part of the migration from Agder is that the migrants brought a seamen’s mentality along with them. They regarded their trip to the United States as temporary … and their plan was eventually to return with money in the bank and a brighter future back home in Norway. Although many ended up in America on a permanent basis, their original plan was often to go back.”

—Siv Ringdal, “Dressing Up in Postwar America,” Norwegian-American Studies, volume 38
A MAN OF THE CHURCH IN AN ERA OF FACTIONS

BY KRISTINA WARNER, NAHA ARCHIVIST, AND DENISE LOGELAND

Olaf Monsen Wangensteen was born in Lærdal, Norway, on September 14, 1873, to Mons Olsen Wangensteen and Martha Monsen. His papers in the NAHA archives offer a window into Norwegian-American church life in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

After immigrating to the United States in 1889, Wangensteen worked briefly as a farmer. Then he embarked on studies at the United Church Seminary in Minneapolis. The United Church (whose full name was the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America) was new at the time. It was formed in 1890 through a merger of three prior Lutheran church synods: the Norwegian Danish Augustana Synod, the Conference of the Norwegian Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood.

But the merger didn’t go entirely smoothly. Some leaders, faculty, and students at the Conference’s Augsburg Seminary resisted coming under the control of the United Church. These “Friends of Augsburg” eventually formed the Lutheran Free Church in 1897. Because of the conflict, for most of the 1890s, the United Church faculty and students had to make do with temporary quarters for their own seminary, not far from Augsburg, at Franklin Avenue and 25th Avenue South in Minneapolis.

In the late 1890s, the conflict between the United Church and Augsburg was resolved by the Minnesota Supreme Court. By early 1902, the United Church had moved its seminary into newly constructed buildings in the St. Anthony Park neighborhood of St. Paul. Today, that campus is called Luther Seminary.

As a young pastor, Wangensteen moved to southern Minnesota, for a call at Spring Grove in Fillmore County. There, he met and married Eleonora Avelsgaard in 1908. Together, they had two children: Mons (Monty) Olaf Bernhard (1910–1977) and Ragna (1912–2001). Their marriage was brief, as Eleonora died in 1913. Wangensteen eventually remarried, with Julia Solberg. He died in 1933 in Melfort, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Wangensteen also worked for a popular cause of his era: abstinence from alcohol. Throughout his life, he was involved in the Minnesota Total Abstinence Society. He wrote advocacy pieces that were published under the pen name “Servus,” Latin for “servant.”

The recently donated Olaf M. Wangensteen papers in the NAHA archives (NAHA 2022/009) contain many photographs of the family throughout the Upper Midwest and Canada, correspondence, pamphlets, and more items that highlight the life of the Wangensteen family and the congregations Olaf Wangensteen served.

More to explore:
- “Norwegian-American Lutheran Church History,” George M. Stephenson, NAHA Studies and Records, volume 2, 1927
- Lutheran Theological Seminaries papers (P0506)
- Congregation records (P0537)
- George Sverdrup: Educator, Theologian, Churchman, James S. Hamre, NAHA, 1987

(currents.fall 2022)
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- Nordic-themed luncheon

For more information and to register, go to naha.stolaf.edu.