From the NAHA Office to Association Members

A Sneak Peak at Norwegian-American Studies, Volume 36

The Norwegian-American Historical Association is pleased to return to publication after a hiatus to reorder the finances and governance of the organization. It is a particular pleasure this fall to present the thirty-sixth volume in a series that began in 1926 with what was then called Studies and Records. Through the years the format and content have changed somewhat, but most volumes of the series—now known as Norwegian-American Studies—have presented a miscellany, including both essays and presentations of primary sources.

Jens Christian Eldal, a senior researcher at the Norwegian Institute of Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU), is a close observer of the traditions of wood construction and architecture in Norway. His essay, presenting a study of the architecture of some of the earliest Norwegian-American Lutheran churches in the Midwest, is a pioneering work in what promises to be a rich field of research. Marvin G. Slind offers a study of Elias Molee, a unique character in the annals of Norwegian-American history, who would have preferred to be remembered here as elias molee for reasons Professor Slind explains. Slind is Professor of History at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Emeritus Professor of History Gary D. Olson of Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has contributed an ably drawn demographic profile of the Norwegian-American community in Sioux Falls based on census data. His method and findings will help link Norwegian-American research to a growing body of research in American and transatlantic history. Carol Colburn and Laurann Gilbertson, of Vesterheim Museum in Decorah, Iowa, turn our attention to the work clothing of Norwegian-Americans. Work clothing tells us much about who we are on a daily basis, and Colburn and Gilbertson’s article contributes to a fuller understanding of how Norwegian-Americans went to work in the United States. James S. Hamre, Emeritus Professor of History at Waldorf College in Forest City, Iowa, has written an introduction to the writing of one of Norwegian-America’s most prolific and often
A Translation from the

Translation services provided by:
Tove and Ole Tobiassen
485 2nd Street
Hammond, WI  54015
tove304@aol.com
715-410-5931

Thank you Tove and Ole!

Private Knud Iverson
Wisconsin Historical Society.
Image ID: 53739
Used with permission
Private Knud Iverson died December 31, 1862 at Stones River, Tennessee just two months after composing this letter. He is buried in Nashville.

He was survived by his wife, Dorthea and their nine children, the youngest of whom he never saw.
The Civil War Collection

As the United States commemorates the 150th anniversary of the War Between the States, we thought it appropriate to highlight the parts of our collection containing materials from the soldiers and families who had firsthand knowledge of the events of the day.

The following is a summary of the collections where Civil War related material can be found.

**NAHA Civil War Resources**


P0020: Ole Andreson Correspondence: Letters to his wife at Wiota, LaFayette County, Wisconsin, from a Norwegian-born farmer who enlisted February 2, 1864, with Company H of the Third Wisconsin Regiment of Infantry and was killed May 25, 1864, at Dallas, Georgia. He describes the health and living conditions of his company, the slaves he meets, destruction of property, and the battle engagement north of Atlanta.

P0027: Peter Christian Asserson Papers: Biographical information on a Norwegian-born rear admiral and civil engineer in the United States Navy. He was an ensign in the navy during the Civil War.

P0035: Ole Olsen Berge Papers of a Norwegian-born farmer at Manitowoc, Wisconsin: Civil War letters by Berge.

P0083: Ingebret Eriksen Papers: Letters to Eriksen, farmer and merchant at Scandinavia, Wisconsin, from Civil War soldiers.

P0114: Ole Grimstvedt Papers: Civil War Reminiscences, "Ole Grimstvedt's Hospital Life from 1862 till April 2nd, 1866." An earthy and realistic account by a western Dane County, Wisconsin, farmer who served in the Co. C, 12th Wis. Vol. Inf. as Ole Olson.

P0144: Hans C. Heg Papers: A typescript copy of a letter by Heg; a letter by Olaf I. Rove to Waldemar Ager, quoting August Reymert concerning Heg's contribution to the Civil War effort; a speech by Julius E. Olson; clippings concerning the Heg monument in Madison, Wisconsin; genealogies; Historic Heg Memorial Park,
Compiled by Jeff Sauve

pamphlet, 1975; typescript copy of a Heg letter from Weaverville, California, October 7, 1849; Photo of a monument to the 15th Wisconsin at Chicamauga Creek; and photocopies of an article by Kevin Die-Zimmel about Heg’s contact with Sherman M. Booth, an abolitionist opponent of the Fugitive Slave Law, and transcriptions of contemporary newspaper articles concerning the “Booth affair.” “The Civil War Letters of Colonel Hans Christian Heg” was published by NAHA in 1936.

P0365: Ole Steensland Papers: Biographical data of a western Dane County, Wisconsin, farmer; an address given at a reunion of the Fifteenth Wisconsin Infantry at Scandia Hall, Chicago (August 29, 1900), in which Steensland recounts his Civil War Experiences including those at Andersonville prison.

P0448 Nehemia Tjernagel papers: “Jens Ritland’s war story”.

P0468: Civil War Papers: Articles, clippings, certificates, Confederate money, correspondence, pamphlets, maps, pictures, and rosters about Norwegians who participated in the Civil War. Derwood Johnson contributed information about nearly 100 who served on the Confederate side, with copies of muster rolls from the National Archives and Texas State Archives. Wally Toensing contributed a list (31 pages) of over 800 who served in the Minnesota units. One folder about the 15th Wisconsin Regiment, 3 folders of rosters and profiles of soldiers of that regiment, one folder of profiles of Norwegians who served in other units. There are folders of letters and documents concerning more than a dozen individual veterans.

P0562 Norse-American Centennial Papers: Civil War Veterans A-Z Correspondence and Reports.

P0681 J.J. Heimark Papers: A translation of B. Aslakson’s “Ti maaneder fangenskab i Andersonville”.


P0853 George Johnson (Guttmorm Johnson Hovden) Civil War Diary: The Civil War Diary of a member of the 15th Wisconsin Regiment, Company G, born in Sigdal, Norway, covering the years 1863-1865. Enlisted as George Johnson, 28 September 1861, he immediately became a Sergeant and later a Second Lieutenant. After the war he married Ragne Snersrud and lived on a farm near Ridgeway, Iowa. The diary was translated by Norma Johnson Jordahl and edited by O. M. Hovde in 1971. The original diary is in the Luther College Library at Decorah, Iowa.

P1027 Ove Lind Papers: Copies of three Civil War letters written by a Private in Company I, 12th Wisconsin Infantry, then in Tennessee, to wife and daughter. First letter written in some town in Tennessee and dated May 8, 1863 [perhaps Memphis]; second letter written in some other town in Tennessee (beginning with the letter ‘C’ [perhaps Colliersville], dated January 31, 1864; and third letter written in some town in Mississippi beginning with the letter ‘N’ [perhaps Natchez, dated November 10, 1863.

P1439 SOLBERG, CARL FREDRIK (1833-1924). CIVIL WAR LETTERS, 1862. Reports (March 7 to March 31, 1962) to Emigranten from the editor, who served briefly as war correspondent for the 15th Wisconsin Regiment, which he had helped recruit. The letters are translated and edited by Clarence A. Clausen. Includes assorted clippings, and a 3-page biographical sketch of Solberg.
New Additions to the Archives

The Archives continue to benefit from the generosity of members and friends who have made important donations. Although we aren’t able to acknowledge all donations here, we do appreciate every donation, large and small. We welcome additional donations of Norwegian-American letters, diaries, photographs, family histories, and community and congregational materials. Families can always rest assured that their donations will remain open for family consultation in the NAHA archives. They can also rest assured that family treasures will not be discarded in a hasty move or by future generations who have lost touch with their Norwegian-American heritage.

If you have old photographs of Norwegian-American family members that you can no longer identify, why not donate them? NAHA staff, visitors, or members may eventually be able to shed light on such mystery photo subjects. Please note the opportunity to help identify the people in a collection of Chicago Norwegian-American glass plate negatives below. The archivists will provide a free lunch to anybody who successfully identifies the family in these photographs, which may be reviewed in the archives.

Recent additions to the manuscripts collection include:

- Ellef Ellefson Family. Photograph of a family reunion, 1910, Viroqua, WI: enlargement (negative included) and newspaper clipping. Added to Collection P0539 Family Histories and Genealogies. Donated by Helen E. Brieske, Salida, CO.

- Norwegian-American Literary Society of Chicago, P0279, additional items added: Grunnlov (1927); A History of Det Litterære Samfund DeLiSa by Helen Fletre (1975); and Festschrift 50 Års Jubileum (1975). Donated by the Society (now inactive).

Recent additions to the photo collection include:


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- Anders Braatvedt, Pedersen. Description of the land, legends and customs of Sigdal in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Added to A.B. Pederson Collection P1555. Translation by Rosella Geotteman, Decorah, Iowa.


- How We Came To Be. Edited by Penny Giesbrecht (Greene Family Reunion, 2011). Added to P0539 Family Histories and Genealogies. Donated by the author.


- Zahl, Ellen Dahlberg. Behind the Blackout Curtains (2007). Added to P0565 Norway in World War II. (Zahl experienced the German occupation of Norway and immigrated to the US in 1948 with her parents and older sister.) Donated by Donna Jackson.


- Den Norske Synodes Præster og Professorer, photographed by J.H. Olson, Minneapolis, Minnesota, ca. 1874. Added to Oversized Photograph Collection.

- Nils Lothe Family of Milltown, WI. Some forty letters and documents (1906-1955); two issues of Hardanger newspaper, the donation of the following Norwegian-American Family Histories and Genealogies. Donated by John Petersen, Bowling Green, KY.

- Anders Braatvedt, Pedersen. Description of the land, legends and customs of Sigdal in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Added to A.B. Pederson Collection P1555. Translation by Rosella Geotteman, Decorah, Iowa.


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I chose to focus on the Civil War collection this issue, to highlight some of the amazing letters and personal histories we house in the NAHA archives during this sesquicentennial period. We’ve published books and Studies articles in the past but we still have some unearthed stories. Along the way, I experienced some serendipitous moments.

As I was searching for untranslated letters by Civil War soldiers for the newsletter, I asked our volunteer, Judy Sosted, to photocopy some letters from our files. A short time later she came to me with tears in her eyes and said I had given her the best gift ever. I had happened to choose a file of letters by her great-great uncle written to family members. While she knew he served in the Civil War, she was not aware of the existence of these letters in our archives. She is currently having the letters translated by fellow Sigdalslag members and offered to donate copies of the translations to NAHA when complete.

The NAHA staff was well represented at the NAHA-Norge conference in Decorah this past June. I met many NAHA members for the first time and greatly enjoyed the presentations and hospitality shown us by the conference committee.

In addition to attending the NAHA-Norway conference, several NAHA staff and volunteers attended the Seven-Lag Stevne in Fargo, North Dakota in July. Jeff Sauve gave two well attended presentations at the stevne, one on creating a family history beyond the names and dates, and one on using the NAHA archives. I attended as a first time lag member and within moments of arriving, met two sisters with whom I share a 3x great grandmother. Again, I met a great number of NAHA members for the first time.

I will also be sharing information about using NAHA online resources with the Romerikslag and Solørslag in Austin, Minn. on September 14th. If you belong to an organization interested in Norwegian-American history or family genealogy, and are looking for an event speaker, please contact us! Gary, Jeff and I enjoy meeting our constituents and sharing our knowledge of NAHA resources.

Finally, I’d like to share more information on the story about Knud Iverson shown on page 2. After finding the letter in our files, one of three letters donated to us, I was curious as to what happened to Knud. From the Vesterheim museum Cival War Database, found at http://vesterheim.org/CivilWar/index.html, I found an entry for Knud and discovered that he died just two months after writing the letter. To understand more about what and who he left behind, I searched our records, Ancestry.com and the major search engines. I discovered that his photo at the Wisconsin Historical Society had been misidentified for years and was only corrected in December 2010. I spoke to descendent Steven W. Thompson of Eau Claire, Wisc., who said it took five years to convince the Wisconsin Historical Society to correct the error. I found a family history on Ancestry and contacted the person who posted the record. Connie Lund Luedke shared the following information with me,

“Evidently Kund and Dorthea Rocknea, his wife, had been living in America only a few years when the war broke out. A local citizen was making comments that “you immigrants” ought to help out your country and join the war. As he and his family were very grateful for this new home, he joined the service. He left his wife and 8 children (plus one on the way) and fought for about one year before he was killed.”

Dorthea eventually remarried and died in Eau Claire, Wisconsin in 1904.

It’s hard to believe it has already been a year since I started as director of NAHA. I have met wonderful members and patrons, learned so much about the treasures that NAHA houses and continue to be amazed at the connectedness of the Norwegian-American community.
NAHA-Norge Conference Recap

The Norwegian-American Historical Association – Norway Chapter (NAHA-Norway) held its eleventh conference at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa on June 14-17, 2011 with the title Migrant Journeys: The Norwegian-American Experience in a Multicultural Context. The conference was the first held on American soil and the largest conference ever held by NAHA-Norway. The conferences are usually held every three years. The publication series Norwegian American Essays is based primarily on peer reviewed presentations from the preceding conference. The location was chosen based upon an invitation from Luther College to hold our conference on their campus in conjunction with Luther College's sesquicentennial in 2011.

The conference program included plenary lectures, individual lectures, roundtable conferences and a varied cultural program. About 110 people attended, three-fourths who came from the USA, while the rest came from Norway. All told, the conference included 47 individual papers in six parallel sessions on a wide variety of themes ranging from literature, linguistic studies, religious studies, history, social science, fine and folk arts, and music. In addition two plenary roundtable sessions were held. The first session discussed a neglected field of Norwegian American studies, gender history and Norwegian American immigrant women. The second session assessed the field of Norwegian American Studies today and tomorrow.

Luther College Professor John R. Christianson opened the conference with an inspiring lecture on the history of Luther College titled “The Dream of a Norwegian University in America.” In the evening Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum hosted a reception for all participants. The following day, Professor emeritus at Saint Olaf College and the University of Oslo, Odd S. Lovoll presented his keynote address titled “Migration and the Norwegian Ethnic Press” followed by the first parallel session. The Washington Prairie Lutheran Church in rural Decorah, a significant symbol of Norwegian American immigrant culture hosted lunch for the participants. Jens Christian Eldal of Norway used the location to speak about architect C. H. Griese and the relationship between Luther College and Norwegian Lutheran churches in Iowa about 1870. The rest of the afternoon was set aside for parallel sessions on campus, and in the evening the participants attended an American Barbecue Dinner in the Shirley Baker Commons.

On June 16, Professor Janne Bondi Johannessen held the second keynote address entitled “The Norwegian Language in of the Midwest: Old-fashioned, Standardised or Anglicised?” Following the sessions, a reception was held in the Dahl Centennial Union followed by a banquet in the Peace Dining Room. David S. Faldet of Luther College, author of Oneota Flow: The Upper Iowa River & Its People presented the banquet speech with the title “Norwegian Adaptation On/Of the Ecotone” June 17, the last day of the conference, included a session and a farewell brunch in the Peace Dining Room.

The conference setting united participants from both sides of the Atlantic with a similar interest in Norwegian American studies. The wide variety of presentations including interdisciplinary and transnational themes illustrated a broad interest in Norwegian American migration history. In our assessment of the conference, the positive comments from participants may influence the NAHA-Norway board to consider the organization of future conferences in the USA.

On behalf of the NAHA-Norway board I wish to thank all participants and presenters who attended the conference. NAHA-Norway wishes to thank NAHA, our sister organization, for their generous economic support. It was very well received, and we appreciate the good ties that exist between the two organizations. I wish to extend a special thank you to the local organizing committee for all of their tireless work, especially Rachel Vagts.

We hope that many of you will join us at our next conference in Norway in 2014!

Terje Hasle Joranger
Chair, NAHA-Norway
Studies

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cited authors, Olaf Morgan Norlie. Those who would like to know more about the indefatigable Norlie will do well to start here. Norwegian-Americahas produced a number of historians, among them Paul Knaplund. Particularly as a Norwegian-American historian, Knaplund is the topic of an article by Richard Cole, Emeritus Professor of History at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. The volume concludes with a presentation of an early story by O.E. Rølvaag, originally published when Rølvaag was a student at St. Olaf College.

Members and friends of the Association will, I think, find both food for the mind and sheer pleasure in reading these essays. They will perhaps also want to know that the volume is dedicated, by permission, to His Majesty King Harald V and Her Majesty Queen Sonja of Norway. The book will be presented to the king and queen as the gift of St. Olaf College on the occasion of their visit to the college on October 14, 2011.

Todd Nichol
Editor
This 1865 tintype photograph shows 30-year-old Private Rasmus Hanson proudly standing next to Old Glory with its 36 stars. His military records indicate he stood 5-foot 3-1/2 inches, with blue eyes and light hair. His occupation was listed as "laborer".

Having emigrated from Hufteren Island near Bergen the previous year, Hanson made his way to Decorah, Iowa, where he was paid $300 to legally substitute for a family man drafted into the Civil War. Enlisting Oct. 26, 1864, in Company E, 13th Iowa infantry, Hanson embarked to the battlefront.

After nearly two months of service, Hanson penned a Christmas letter to family and friends back in Norway, informing them of his joining the Army (Dec. 25, 1865, Graysville, Tenn.):

Very likely I have been a fool, and you may think that now I have really gone off my base, but going off to war isn't so dangerous when God is on your side.

Although not stated directly, Hanson suffered much hardship and hunger during his first few months of enlistment under Gen. Sherman and his March to the Sea. Discharged July 21, 1865, Hanson returned to Iowa where in 1866 he married Gjertrud Endreson, originally from Bergen.

Together they had nine children, and homesteaded 90 acres near Clarkfield, Minn. Hanson passed away in 1916.

Reprinted with permission from the Sons of Norway Viking (May, 2011).
Fritt Ord Foundation Honors Odd Lovoll

On September 6, 2011 in Oslo, Norway, the foundation Fritt Ord feted Odd Lovoll with the Fritt Ords Honnør in recognition of his scholarly contributions to the history of the Norwegian-American press. Fritt Ord, which means “Freedom of Expression” in English, was founded in 1974 to “protect and promote freedom of expression and the environment for freedom of expression in Norway, especially by encouraging lively debate and the courageous use of free speech”.

The Fritt Ord Honnør, or Freedom of Expression Tribute, acknowledges remarkable efforts to promote free speech. Each tribute is accompanied by a crystal vase and a monetary award. Professor Guri Hjeltnes presented the award to Odd Lovoll at the Foundation headquarters in Oslo. At the awards ceremony, Odd delivered a presentation on Norwegian-American history, which was followed by a reception for about 100 invited guests. A celebratory dinner with his family, friends and representatives from Fritt Ord followed the reception.

The Fritt Ord Foundation financed Odd Lovoll’s research for his most recent publication Norwegian Newspapers in America (2010) and will fund publication of the Norwegian-language edition. Odd served as editor of NAHA from 1980 to 2000, during which time he produced 32 NAHA publications. In 1992, he was named the first holder of the King Olav V Chair in Scandinavian Studies at St. Olaf College. He taught in the St. Olaf College History and Norwegian departments between 1974 and 2000.