

**Collection Name:**

Norse-American Centennial papers, 1923-1927

**Collection Number:**

P0562

**Extent:**

6.2 cubic feet (7 archives boxes, 1 half archives boxes, 2 half oversized legal boxes) and 8 flat boxes  
5 film reels (3 16mm and 2 35mm)

**Biography/History:**

The centennial of organized Norwegian migration provided an opportunity for Norwegian-Americans to celebrate their heritage and, more importantly, to demonstrate their American-ness. The celebrations, held in many North American cities and culminating in a major festival at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in June 1925, showed how Norwegian-Americans had already contributed, as well as how well they fit in their new homes. The celebrations constituted a complex process of identity building and a tricky balancing of old culture and new.

Advertised as "The World's Largest Gathering for 1925," promoters described the Twin Cities celebration as "stupendous" and "monumental." Events over the four-day period included speeches by Norwegian, Canadian, Icelandic, and American dignitaries, including U.S. President Calvin Coolidge; religious services; musical performances; displays of handcrafts, fine arts, and natural resources; and sporting events. The high point with a lavish "Pageant of the Northmen." With a cast of 1,500, the melodramatic account of a thousand years of Norwegian history featured stories of heroic settlement, noteworthy individuals, and triumphs in the "new" world.

The Norse-American Centennial was a historical moment that brought national attention to Minnesota's Norwegian immigrant community. To rapt attendees this was a cultural celebration, but behind the scenes the event challenged Norwegian-American leaders, intellectuals, and the broader Norwegian-American community to reexamine their heritage and role as Americans. One year prior to the celebration, the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 harshly defined insiders and outsiders. While northern Europeans fared relatively well under the new quota system, many Norwegian-Americans seized this moment as an opportunity to elevate their status and dispute negative stereotypes within the minds of their fellow Americans.

The celebration was initiated by the general council of the Bygdelag — local history clubs for Norwegian immigrants and their descendants organized by region of origin. The materials generated by the Norse-American Centennial, an association incorporated in 1925 in St. Paul, are rich and varied. The collection describes in detail the management of the celebration and gives data on observances outside of Minnesota, including Chicago, Canada, Boston, and Brooklyn. Letters and essays reveal the loyalty of Norwegian Americans to their cultural heritage, the rivalry among groups of Norwegians in America, and their internal struggles of understanding ethnic identity.



### **Scope and Content:**

Correspondence, minutes, financial records, reports, programs, clippings, pictures, pamphlets, and scrapbooks of an association incorporated in 1925 in St. Paul, Minnesota, to supervise the observance of the arrival of the first group of Norwegian immigrants in America. The collection describes in detail the management of the celebration and gives data on observances in Chicago, Canada, Boston, and Brooklyn. Letters and essays reveal the loyalty of Norwegian Americans to their cultural heritage and the rivalry among area groups of Norwegians in America. The celebration was initiated by the bygdelags. The chief officials were Gisle Bothne, S. H. Holstad, J. A. Holvik, Elisa P. Farseth, and Mrs. Wm. O. Storlie. Correspondents include Juul Dieserud, Knut Gjerset, Hanna Astrup Larsen, and O. M. Norlie. The centennial received nationwide press coverage.

### **Arrangement:**

- Section I: Correspondence
- Section II: Minutes, records, and reports
- Section III: Exhibition materials and memorabilia
- Section IV: Clippings
- Section V: Photographs, posters, and film

### **Funding:**

Funding to digitize the Norse-American Centennial papers provided to the Norwegian-American Historical Association through the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, a component of the Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy constitutional amendment, ratified by Minnesota voters in 2008.



### **[Section I: Correspondence](#)**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>
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1	1	1924 January 28-1924 November 24
1	2	1924 November 25-1925 January 11
1	3	1925 January 12-1925 January 24
1	4	1925 January 28-1925 February 10
1	5	1925 February 11-1925 February 25
1	6	1925 February 26-1925 March 11
1	7	1925 March 12-1925 March 23
1	8	1925 March 24-1925 March 31
2	1	1925 April 1-1925 April 10
2	2	1925 April 11-1925 April 22
2	3	1925 April 23-1925 April 29
2	4	1925 April 30-1925 May 6
2	5	1925 May 7-1925 May 15
2	6	1925 May 16-1925 May 24
2	7	1925 May 25-1925 June 1
2	8	1925 June 2-1925 July 9
3	1	1925 July 10-1925 October 9
3	2	1925 October 14-1925 December 6
3	6	Civil War veterans correspondence and reports, 1925 January 7-1925 May 19
3	7	Sloopers correspondence and articles, 1923 March 26-1925 July 29
7	3	Correspondence, pamphlets, and reports, 1925
10	7	O.J. Kvale speech and correspondence, 1925

## Section II: Minutes, records, and reports

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	9	Joint resolution, 1924 Photocopy.
3	3	O.M Norlie material
3	4	Reports and minutes, 1924 September 24-1925 October 16
3	5	Reports and biographies, undated
3	8	Lists of officers and committee members, undated
3	9	Norse-American Centennial, Inc. audit reports, 1925 April 30-1925 November 5 Prepared by Charles H. Preston & Co.
4	1	Bulletins, 1925 January 29-1925 May 30
4	2	Lists of members of organizations, undated
10	1	Exhibit and souvenir records, 1925
10	2	Press and publicity, 1925 March 10-1925 June 4, undated
10	6	List of guests
12	3	Secretary budgets (Budget Committee) and pamphlets
13	1	Norse-American Centennial, Inc. financial record book, 1923 November 28-1926 June 19



### Section III: Exhibition materials and memorabilia

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>
4	3	Commemorative stamps and House Resolutions
4	4	Receipts and rosters, 1925
4	5	Art exhibit, 1925
5	1	Art exhibit, 1925
5	2	“Cantata” by F. Melius Christiansen
5	3	“Sange, Hundredaarsfesten 17 de Mai 1914”
7	1-2	Pamphlets and programs, 1923-1925 Includes “The Presidents Tributes to Norwegians” and “Address of President Coolidge Before the Norwegian centennial Celebration at Minnesota State Fairgrounds, June 8, 1925.”
7	5	Pamphlets and booklets, 1925
7	6	Pageant of the Northman, 1925
7	7	Essays, “Why celebrate the Centennial” most significant contribution, 1925-1925 One essay (Manuscript no. 5) was not digitized since it was bound.
9	6	Norse-American Centennial Cookbook, 1925
10	8	Souvenir program, Norse celebration, Camrose, Alberta, Canada, 1926
12	2	Souvenir pamphlets
12	4	Red and blue felt flag advertising the Centennial
12	4	Souvenir postcard for the Norse-American Centennial
12	6	Information about Centennial medals
14	1	Flag used at the Norse-American Centennial
14	3-11	Ribbons worn by Bygdelag and other groups at the Centennial Four ribbons donated from Ella Rølvaag Tweet.
14	12	“Knowledge is power” copper medallion from Ella Rølvaag Tweet
14	13	Viking ship bracelet from Ella Rølvaag Tweet
14	14	Large Centennial medal from Ella Rølvaag Tweet Made of thick silver. Approximately 33,750 made.
15	1-3	Thinner Centennial medals Note: Two are thinner.
15	4-7	Ribbons worn by Bygdelag and other groups and the Centennial
15	8	Norse-American Centennial pin with red, white, and blue ribbon
15	9	Pocket mirror with image of Haakon VII, King of Norway, Queen Maud, and Crown Prince Olav made for the Centennial
15	10	Norse-American Centennial draft logo
19		Memorabilia, 1925



- Decorative and bound books presented at the Norse-American Centennial from organizations in Norway. Includes: Greetings from Borgund Stavkirke to the wives of pastors in the Norwegian-American church.
- 20 Memorabilia, 1925  
Decorative and bound books presented at the Norse-American Centennial from organizations in Norway. Includes: Greetings from the Norwegian Press to the Norwegian-American Press, and Greetings from Norwegian Schools (Kgl. Frederiks Universitet, Norges Tekniske Høiskole, Norges Landbrukshøiskole, Bergens Museum).
- 21 Memorabilia, 1925  
Decorative and bound books presented at the Norse-American Centennial from organizations in Norway. Includes: Greetings from Norges Rederforbund, Greetings from Nordmanns Forbundet (also includes greetings to NAHA in 1950 on 25th anniversary), Greetings from the Norwegian Government, and Kongelige Selskap for Norges Vel.

#### Section IV: Clippings

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>
5	4	Clippings, 1924 June-1925 December 4
5	5	Clippings, 1925 January 23-1925 June 5
5	6	Clippings, 1925 December-1927 June 16
6	1	Roy Thorshov clippings, circa 1925
6	2	Clipping scrapbook, 1925 February 12-1925 June 4 Topics include: Iowa, Mississippi, Oregon, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wisconsin.
6	3	Clipping scrapbook, 1925 March 12-1925 June 30 Topics include: Scandinavian population in the US; tributes to traits and achievements of Norwegians according to newspaper comments, Calvin Coolidge's speech and others; first navigators, first native born Norwegians in America; early and prominent pioneers; Colonel Heg; Ammundsen.
6	4	Clippings, 1925 March-1925 April
6	5	Clipping scrapbook, 1925 January 7-1925 June 28 Topics include: President Calvin Coolidge's trip to the Centennial.
8	1	Attendance items clippings scrapbook, 1925
8	2	American press comments clippings scrapbooks, 1925
8	3	Preparations clippings scrapbook, 1925



8	4	Preparations and events clippings scrapbook, 1925
9	1	State celebrations, Proposal to organize NAHA, comments clippings scrapbook, 1925
9	2	American press comments clippings scrapbook, 1925
9	3	Other current events clippings scrapbook, 1925
9	4	Minnesota press comments clippings scrapbook, 1925
9	5	American press comments clippings scrapbook, 1925
10	3	Baldishol tapestry clippings, 1925
10	4	Carl G.O. Hansen clipping collection
12	1	Clippings
15		Newspapers Includes Skandinaven special edition "Norsk-Amerikaneres Hundre Aars Fest" with picture of Calvin Coolidge, Minneapolis Journal Rotogravure section with photographs of the crowds on Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis and at the Calvin Coolidge with Governor Christianson, and many more.

#### **Section V: Photographs, Posters, and Film**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>
7	4	Photographs
10	5	Norse-American Centennial film information
11	1-5	Building plans for the State Fairgrounds Building plans for 5 buildings.
12	5	Copies of photographs
14	2	President's guard roster poster
17		Panoramic photographs
18	1-9	VHS film copies of the Centennial Film

#### **Film reels**

Centennial film at Minnesota State Fairgrounds, 1925 June 6-9

Three 16mm film reels are copies of the two 35mm film reels.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Description</b>
00:00:46:	Edited by J.A. Holvik, Produced by Ray-Bell Films Inc. St. Paul, Minn.
00:01:33:	Centennial Medal
00:03:10:	The General Council of Bygdelags
00:03:27:	The Board of Directors
00:03:43:	Managing Director, Mr. S.H. Holstad
00:03:54:	The Program Committee
00:04:19:	The Centennial Committee of the Norwegian Lutheran Church
00:04:30:	Supreme Board of Directors, Sons of Norway



- 00:04:43: Senator Peter Norbeck, Member of Committee of Memorial Medal and Stamps
- 00:05:00: Congressman O.J. Kvale, Member of Committee on Memorial Medal and Stamps
- 00:05:13: The Budget Committee
- 00:05:24: The Central Committee of the Women's Auxiliary
- 00:05:40: The Committee on Exhibits, Dr. Knut Gjerset (Chairman), Miss Herborg Reque (Secretary)
- 00:05:52: Chairman of the Finance Committee, Mr. E.G. Quamme
- 00:05:59: Publicity Director, Mr. G.B. Wollan
- 00:06:47: State Fair Grounds
- 00:07:02: Crowds bound for the 36 bygdelag reunions
- 00:07:17: The Exhibit Building
- 00:07:27: A relic from the days when speed was no object
- 00:07:33: A speed-way for nerve and skill
- 00:07:41: A choice of a lot of strings-eight on each!
- 00:07:50: Products of busy hands and love of art
- 00:08:01: Interior of farm home in Norway in 1825
- 00:08:11: Interior of city home in Norway in 1825
- 00:08:20: Model of the Thronhjem (Trondheim) Cathedral
- 00:08:33: Painting Awarded Medal-"In Peer Gynt's Land", Sigurd Skou
- 00:08:54: "King Sigurd, the Crusader, entering Constantinople."- A Frida Hanson tapestry
- 00:09:08: The Mons Breidvik Exhibit
- 00:09:17: The Canadian Exhibit
- 00:09:25: A bit of country moved indoors-Minnesota State Exhibit
- 00:09:37: Replica of a pioneer log cabin-Minnesota State Exhibit
- 00:10:00: Mrs. Berljot Aalrud Tillisch, Interpreter of Norse Folk songs;
- 00:10:12: Mrs. Marie Michelet, Oslo
- 00:10:19: Mrs. Holmfridur Arnadottir, Iceland
- 00:10:28: Mrs. Betsy Kjelsberg, Oslo
- 00:10:42: The Oslo Student Chorus-and others
- 00:11:09: Otto Clausen, Manager, Alfred Russ, Director
- 00:11:20: St. Olaf Choir
- 00:11:46: Augsburg Seminary Glee Club, Henry Opseth, Director
- 00:12:18: St. Olaf Church Glee Club, D. A. Tjomsland, Director
- 00:12:34: Joint Choruses of Grand Forks, N.D., Mrs. David Stove, Director
- 00:12:51: Norwegian Singers' Association of America
- 00:13:06: Fredrick Wick, Director in-Chief
- 00:13:23: Luther College Band, Carlo A. Sperah, Director
- 00:13:47: St. Olaf College Band, J. Arndt Bergh, Director





- 00:14:32: Hans Seland, of storytelling fame, springs a good one  
00:14:24: Mons Breidvik, portrait artist  
00:15:21: Descendants of the "sloopers" on board escorted by Dr. O.M. Norlie  
00:15:46: Officers of the President's Honor Guard [possibly Oley Nelson, Civil War vet]  
00:16:02: Hon. Thomas H. Johnson representing the Government of Canada  
00:16:10: Prof. Gisle Bothne, President of Norse-American Centennial  
00:16:17: Dr. Fredrik Stag, President of University of Oslo, Hon. J.A.O. Preus, ex-Governor of Minnesota and Brig. Gen. A.W. Bjornstad  
00:16:36: Hon. H. Bryn, Minister from Norway to the United States  
00:16:55: Official Representatives From Norway (W. Morgenstjerne, Fredrik Stang, Lars Oftedal, H. Bryn, C.J. Hambro, Johan Lunde)  
00:17:13: Sunday morning-when throngs meet to worship, Norse services in the Hippodrome at ten o'clock  
00:18:18: Dr. H. G. Stub, President of the Norwegian-Lutheran Church of America, delivered the festal sermon  
00:18:27: Right Reverend Johan Lunde, Bishop of Oslo, who brought greetings from the Church of Norway  
00:18:38: Dr. J.A. Aasgaard delivered the festal sermon at the Young People's services  
00:18:51: Norse services in Grandstand at ten o'clock  
00:19:01: Festal sermon by Rev. H.K. Madsen  
00:19:31: The Bishop meets the Norwegian-American singers after the service  
00:20:00: Invocation by Prof. L. Pedersen  
00:20:07: English services in Grandstand at eleven o'clock  
00:20:44: Rev. E.E. Gynild, President of the Lutheran Free Church  
00:20:50: Dr. L.W. Boe conducted Liturgical service [St. Olaf College president]  
00:20:57: Rev. O.H. Sletten delivered the festal sermon  
00:21:21: Sunday afternoon-Assembling for the Norse Guests' Session  
00:22:33: Glimpses of the Athletic Meet, University of Minnesota Stadium  
00:23:24: Miss Helen Filkey, Chicago  
00:22:45: Joie Ray  
00:23:54: Harold Osborn, Champion High Jumper  
00:24:06: Norge Athletic Club  
00:24:16: Norse Sport Club  
00:25:16: St. Olaf College Baseball Team. F.B. Anderson, Coach  
00:25:50: Concordia College Baseball Team, Fenwick H. Watkins, Coach  
00:26:16: Augsburg Baseball Team, S. Melby, Coach  
00:26:37: Luther College Baseball Team-Victors, S. Reque, Coach  
00:27:03: Arnold Oss, Manager of the Meet  
00:27:11: Rehearsing for the final spectacle-"The Pageant of the Northmen"





NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

00:28:26: Col. Hans Heg and the 15th Wisconsin Volunteers  
00:29:21: The Mighty Odin  
00:29:34: The Death of Balder  
00:29:41: Valkyrier of Ancient Lore  
00:29:53: Rev. C.L. Clausen, the Pioneer Pastor at Muskego, Wisconsin- A. Erdahl  
00:30:09: "Saeter" (Chalet) girls  
00:30:20: Daughters of Norway Drill Teams  
00:31:06: An Ancient National art revived- Folk songs and games  
00:32:26: President Coolidge and Party arrive at the St. Paul depot  
00:32:41: Reception in Concourse of depot  
00:33:01: U.S. President and Mrs. Coolidge, accompanied by Secretary of State and Mrs. Kellogg  
  
00:33:24: At Secretary Kellogg's home  
00:33:43: Notables attending the Centennial, meet the President  
00:35:11: Leaving for Minneapolis  
00:36:20: Arriving Nicollet Hotel for luncheon  
00:36:33: At the Fairgrounds for the Presidential session  
00:37:19: President Coolidge arrives  
00:38:18: Senator Henrik Shipstead, Chairman  
00:38:27: Gov. Theodore Christiansen, of Minnesota, introduces the President  
00:39:08: Hon. H. Bryn, Minister from Norway, presents greetings from H.M. King Haakon, VII to President Calvin Coolidge  
  
00:39:27: Hon. C.J. Hambro presents greetings from the Storting and Cabinet of Norway  
  
00:39:40: Governor Christiansen receives the official greeting  
00:39:54: Hon. Thomas H. Johnson brings greetings from the Government of Canada  
  
00:40:11: Address by Hon. Frank B. Kellogg, Secretary of State  
00:40:24: Five hundred children portray a story in colors  
00:40:56: President Calvin Coolidge  
00:41:27: End of film.