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**Hei Hei alle
sammen** –
Hello
everyone!

I look forward
to leading
this
organization
for the next
three years

along with your new, extremely
capable and tech savvy vice
president, Amber Walters. She is
the one who completely overhauled
and updated our Telelaget of
America [website](#).

If you haven't already, please take a
moment to check out our website
at telelagetofamerica.com. It is now
easier than ever to navigate and
chock-full of fascinating information
about Telemark. Right from the
home page you can become or
renew your membership or check
on the latest events and
happenings. Across the tabs at the
top of this beautifully redesigned
home page, you can take deep
dives into: What is *Telelaget*,
Bridging Past and Present,
Telemark Norway, Heritage
Resources and my personal
favorite... the [Telelag Store](#) which
has fun merchandise that is only a
click or two away.

I am excited to be involved with the
planning of the 2026 7+ Lag *Stevne*

that will be held in Stoughton, WI. I
hope most of you have penciled the
dates on your calendar with the
plan to attend – come for all or part!
(more on page 3).

I'll close with just a little about me.
My husband, Scott Johnson and I
are both retired and live in Clear
Lake, IA with our sweet dog,
Preeka. Our son, Zachary, is a
mechanical engineer in Shoreview,
MN. All of us, minus the dog, took a
trip to Norway in July of 2024. As to
my heritage, my mother's
grandfather emigrated from Seljord
in Telemark in 1884 while my
father's grandmother emigrated
from Risør in East Agder in 1885.

Telesoga and TeleNews

Telelaget has switched printers this
fall and we've changed how our
printed publications are mailed out.
No more "sticky" tabs! Your
membership expiration date will be
on the envelope mailing label. If you
are receiving a digital copy, your
expiration date is below the
masthead. Membership runs from
January through December. If your
membership expires in 2025, renew
today on the [website](#), or mail in the
form on the back of your Telesoga.

Expect to see future TeleNews
delivered to your email address. As
an example, our Aug 2025 member
email can be viewed at this [link](#).

Farewell from Marne



Greetings,

It has been my pleasure to serve the Board and Membership of Telelaget of America as President for the last two years. The Telelaget of America Board has worked very hard and accomplished much during this time.

A wonderful new Telelaget website was constructed and the "Patchwork of Our Ancestors Lives" *Stevne* held in Spicer, Minnesota are two of the many outstanding achievements that your Telelaget Board has done and will continue to do. A new leadership team is waiting in the wings and will have more exciting ideas to share with you.

All the best, Marne Olson

WELCOME New Members!

Roger Abrahamson — Minneapolis, MN
Kjell Steinar Brennemo — Norway
Valerie Clubb — Granbury, TX
Ellen Kay Endriss — Winston Salem, NC
Craig & Pam Evert — Glendo, WY
David D. Floren — Dassel, MN
Robert Helgeson — Fort Myers, FL
Emily Larsen — Maplewood, MN
Sarah Malmquist — Minneapolis, MN
Dan Nelson
Beverly Aga Schmidt — Saint Paul, MN
Janice Somerfeld — Brooklyn, WI
Shawn Tanner — Cary, NC

Telelaget Membership
272 members
(174 individual and 46 couples)

2025-2026 TOA Board Members

On August 2, 2025
7+Lag *Stevne*, the board held election of officers. Newly elected President Naomi Nowland moved to accept the officers as presented - New directors are Joran Hagen Olson and Anne Haugen Wagn.

For a complete list of current board members and ex-officio *Telelaget* members, refer to the *Telesoga* or visit our [website](#).

Officers

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Anne Haugen-Wagn

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Meet Two New Directors

Joran Hagen Olson

has had a long-time association with Telelaget of America in the much valued role of genealogist. She got the genealogy bug in her youth by listening to her parents' stories and discussions and thus she has supported *Telelag* members with their own research for many years. Her ancestors hail from Tinn, and Joran has visited cousins there and keeps in touch with them with the hopes of visiting again. Joran resided just south of Fargo for many years until moving to Sioux Falls to be close to her daughter. She is happy to be a "cheerleader" for the *Telelag*!



Joran Hagen Olson

Anne Haugen-Wagn

became a member of Telelaget in 2000, and a Telemark Director on the board in 2001. She has been one of our Telemark Liaisons since then. Anne spent much of her childhood, listening to elderly people tell stories from the past. She trained as a teacher in Notodden and has lived there ever since. Her passion for history led her to study the subject further, and she spent more than 25 years teaching, primarily history, in secondary schools. She is also a trained journalist and has written 10 local history books, two of which focus on emigration to the USA. She has visited the Midwest many times and has helped numerous Americans with roots in Telemark trace their ancestry. She has shown them their family farms and assisted with



Anne Haugen-Wagn

genealogical research. When *Telelaget* has brought members on tours to Telemark, she has played an active role in organizing and guiding these visits.

2026 Stevne - July 15-18

Telelaget of America is Hosting the 2026 7+Lag Stevne in Stoughton, Wisconsin!

[Stoughton](#) is located just 15 miles south of Wisconsin's capital city of Madison. Stoughton has over 13,000 residents and is built along the banks of the scenic Yahara River. The town is named for a man who bought land there in 1847.



Stoughton:

Connections, Community, Culture
7+Lag Stevne
July 15-18, 2026
Hosted By Telelaget

It wasn't until after the Civil War that Stoughton became a predominantly Norwegian community. A Norwegian immigrant from Telemark by the name of

T. G. Mandt founded a wagon company in 1865, which ended up employing hundreds of Norwegian immigrants. Even today, Stoughton is known for its biggest festival, their annual [Syttende Mai Celebration](#) which

we all know is the Norwegian Constitution Day.

A block of rooms will be reserved at a local hotel, and a Chamber of Commerce-generated list of B&Bs and [Vrbo](#) will be provided.



Sons of Norway Lodge

We'll start the *Stevne* with a bus tour on Wednesday (15th) morning hosted by Dana Kelly, the executive director of the Norwegian American Genealogical Center and Naeseth Library in Madison, Wisconsin. We are still working out the exact specifics, but the tour will probably include visiting and hearing the Norwegian history of the East Koshkonong Church, West Koshkonong Church, Liberty Church, and maybe the Cambridge Historic School Museum. In addition, we just might have to stop in Rockdale to see the restored beer cellar!



Stoughton Heritage Mural

On Thursday (16th), we'll have our opening session, and then the presentations and demonstrations begin. These will be held in the Sons of Norway Mandt Lodge 5-314. This handicapped accessible two story lodge is located right next door to the Norwegian Heritage Center called "*Livsreise*," which

translates into 'Life's Journey.' It has five different interactive kiosks that examine Norway's social and economic conditions, which led to emigration. In addition, it has a handicapped accessible movie theatre which will be showing different videos throughout the *stevne*.

Directly across the street is the [Stoughton History Museum](#), housed in the former Universalist Church, which was the first building in Stoughton to be placed on the National Registry of Historic Places. It also has a display of Bunads, including the City of Stoughton's own certified *bunad*. Just steps away is the Chorus House, which will 'house' all the lags' genealogists who are always ready to help you locate more relatives.

Stoughton's historic downtown Main Street has many places on the State and National Register of Historic Places and is extremely walkable, which is a good thing because you'll want to check out the following:

- The Nordic Nook, an incredible, two-level store loaded with all things Scandinavian. One visit is not enough to take in everything they have.
- Viking Brew Pub has a smoke breathing dragon that you need to see to believe.
- Dessert Café has delicious and decadent cheesecake bombs.
- Cheesers has cheese (duh), wine, meats, craft beers, fresh cheese curds every Thursday and of course, 'brunost.'
- Fosdal Home Bakery's very aroma is enticing. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the 1901 Opera House. It is one of only four original two-story opera houses still in use today!

Stoughton is an experience you don't want to miss. We'll be using a lot of local talent for our demonstrations and presentations since Stoughton has three living Gold Medal rosemalers, Hardanger fiddlers, carvers, historians and its own special charm.

"As you wander through our town of Stoughton, you will uncover local art, unique shops, rich history, delicious treats, and a vibrant celebration of Norwegian heritage and music."

- directly from [Visit Stoughton website](#).

We hope to see you there next July 15-18, 2026!

Your *Stevne* Planning Committee

Naomi Nowland —
president@telelagetofamerica.com

Amber Walters —
vicepresident@telelagetofamerica.com

Wendi Storhoff — —
treasurer@telelagetofamerica.com



Our [website](#) will always have the most current information on this future event.

Following In The Footsteps of Ancestors: - A Lifelong Dream Comes True

By Tomine Kivle, Hjartdal Norway

On Thursday, July 31 2025, *Telelag* member Sarah Malmquist and her family visited Hjartdal. The town that we live in or near, and often drive both to and through, may not seem that special to us, but for Sarah and her family it means a great deal.

“This is a trip that I think the older generation has been waiting for their whole lives!” says Sarah. She is both excited and a little nervous. Today, after a long wait, they will finally arrive in Hjartdal, the place her family left in the mid-1800s to start a new life in the United States.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of emigration from Norway to the U.S. At that time, around 2,000 people left Hjartdal municipality to seek their fortune across the Atlantic.

“We had to use a travel agent to coordinate with so many people”, explains Sarah, the family’s unofficial travel leader.

A Sister City in Wisconsin

The family lives in Wisconsin, which Hjartdal municipality has a special connection to. A “sister town agreement” was signed in 1989 between Hjartdal and Coon Valley, Wisconsin.

A travel group of 17 people takes a short sightseeing break before heading to their ancestors’ place of origin. There are aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, grandparents and grandchildren.

The majority of the people who emigrated from Hjartdal back in the 1800s settled in Wisconsin.

“We have heard stories all our lives about where our ancestors came from, but to actually be here... it’s something completely different” says Sarah with a smile.

The family has spent several days traveling around Norway. Bergen, Hardanger, Oslo, and Telemark have all been on the program. But it was Hjartdal that everyone was most excited about.

“This is a lifelong dream being fulfilled”, Sarah says.

A Warm Welcome

When the American family finally arrives in Hjartdal, they are welcomed by locals who are ready to show them around and tell them about their family history.

“It’s very moving. You feel like you are coming home, even though you’ve never been here before, says one of the older family members, with tears in their eyes.”

The group visits the old church, cemeteries, and several farms that their ancestors once lived on. For many, it becomes an emotional journey where history suddenly feels very close.

“I think everyone feels a strong connection to this place now”, Sarah says.

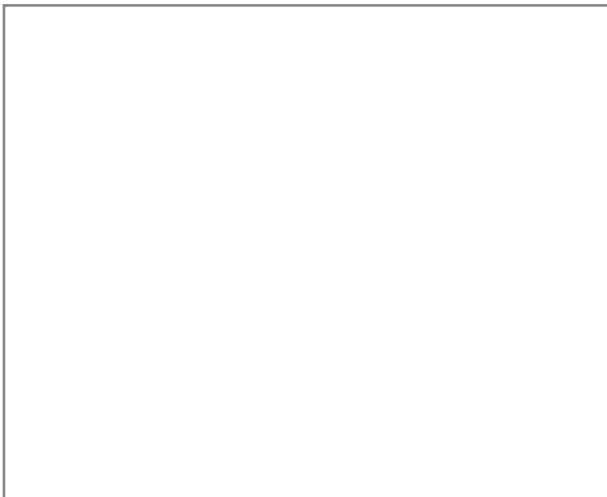


Sarah Malmquist and the Hjartdal mayor.

Strengthening the Bond

Hjartdal municipality has in recent years placed greater focus on strengthening ties with Norwegian-Americans who have roots in the area. Several groups from the U.S. visit every summer, but this year, because of the 200-year anniversary, the interest has been even greater.

“We are so grateful for the hospitality we have been shown here. It means more than words can say”, Sarah concludes.



June 2025 St. Olaf College Conference Videos

Crossings and Connections, our conference commemorating 200 years of Norwegian migration, took place in June on the campus of our host institution, St. Olaf College. The gathering included a wide variety of experiences, from tours of historic sites, to film, to musical performances. It also included a series of talks geared to the public. Videos of those sessions are now available on [YouTube](#), thanks to a generous grant from the Sons of Norway Foundation. Whether you view them on your own or with a group, we invite you to explore these presentations.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Haakon’s October Visit



To mark the 200th anniversary of the first Norwegian emigration to the United States, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Haakon visited MN, IA and New York. This visit was to help strengthen cooperation between Norway and the United States, especially in business, research and culture.

The Crown Prince itinerary included Decorah, Iowa and Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, where he met with Minnesota Governor Tim Walz.

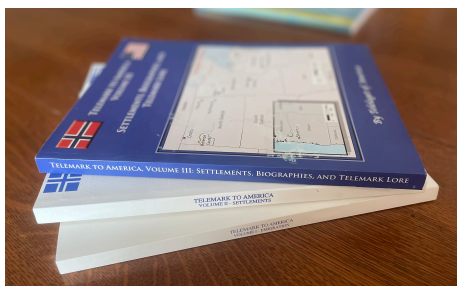
While in Decorah, IA he visited the National Norwegian American Museum and Folk Art School, as well as Luther College.

The Crown Prince opened the new [Saga Center](#) within the John Haugo Bibliotek at Norway House in Minneapolis. The same day a business forum was held, hosted by [Innovation Norway](#), the Norwegian government's official trade organization.

On October 9, he traveled to New York where the Crown Prince welcomed the ship "Restauration."

Publications for Sale

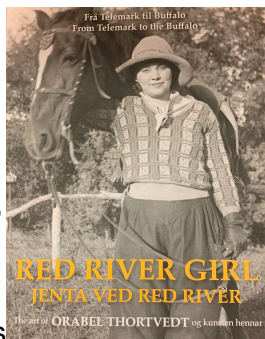
Telemark to America Series Available to Purchase from [Telelaget Store](#)



Telelaget has published a set of Norwegian-American history books. The [first volume](#) gives an overview of *Telemark* and its immigrant settlements in America. The [second book](#) in the series (which has been updated and re-published) is a [collection of articles](#) from the *Telesoga* and 1926 *Årbok* about *Teler* settlements in America. [Volume three](#) adds more about settlements, plus biographies and *Telemark* lore.

Red River Girl — our Most Popular Book

The text is both in Norwegian and English. Orabel Thortvedt, granddaughter of pioneer Olav G. Geitestad/Thortvedt, devoted much of her life exploring and depicting her story. She was a trained artist, loved animals and was inordinately interested in local history. This beautiful coffee table book portrays the work of this fascinating artist. At the same time, it tells a touching family saga through story and art.



To see where Orabell lived, and hear of her life in Houston County, visit the display at the Houston County Historical Society. Available to purchase from the [Telelaget Store](#).

TOA Website Updates

Your *Telelaget* Team

If you need to contact our organizations team, our website now includes name and contact information of the individuals. Check out the [Telelaget Team](#) under the What is *Telelaget* web site section.

Convenient Links!

For your convenience, our web site now has links to two other Norwegian-American websites - *Fellesraad* and 7+Lag.

Fellesraad

The Bygdelag movement is still going strong, with 30 active lags representing as many regions. **Norwegian-American Bygdelagnes Fellesraad** (NABF) is the national council for the Norwegian-American Bygdelag. They stand as a connecting link between lags, and their website is an authoritative resource for all the bygdelag.

[Visit Fellesraad](#)

<https://www.fellesraad.com/>

7+Lag

Eight lags make up this umbrella group, and they have an annual Stevne together. A different lag hosts each yearly event, and the website gets updated with details as plans come together.

[7+Lag](#)

<https://www.7lagstevne.com/>

Emigrasjonsbunaden - The Emigration Bunad

When Sons of Norway was cleaning out storage closets in 2018, imagine my utter surprise not only to unbox a full *bunad* in new condition, but to find one with a unique theme. There had to be a good story behind this rare find. Read more by clicking on this [website](#) link!

Kirn Family Donates History Books



The family of Alice Kirn, former *Telesoga* publisher, will be donating many history books from her extensive library to *Telelaget*.

Telelaget can choose which books they would like to keep (or sell), and the *bygdebøker* will be received and housed at the Haugo Library at Norway House.

If your family has Norwegian-America history books that need preservation, consider donating to your county historical society.

Gift A Membership!

Something to consider! A gift membership is unique - especially to someone who shares your ancestry. Younger generations are interested in experiences vs. “stuff. If you’re a senior, a gift membership creates a travel buddy to a future *Stevner* or *Syttende Mai* celebrations.

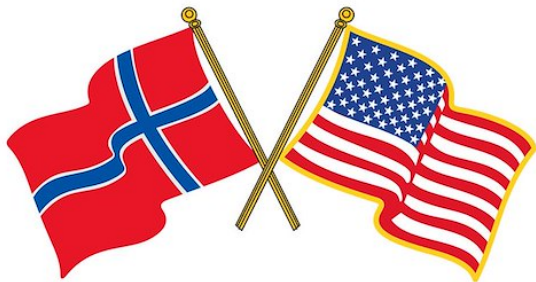
Consider A Bequest to *Telelaget of America!*

A bequest is a simple way to support *Telelaget of America* and ensure that the *lag* can continue to celebrate our Telemark Norwegian heritage.

Telelaget of America is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your donations are tax deductible in the U.S..

Are you a Thrivent Member?

Thrivent Choice Dollars can be directed to *Telelaget of America!* If you’re an eligible Thrivent Financial member and have Choice Dollars available to direct, call 800-847-4836 and say “Thrivent Choice” or go to www.thrivent.com.



Check Out Our New *Telelaget Store*

Need a gift for the the up-coming holidays!

This spring we expanded our on-line store to include TOA identified merchandise! If it’s been a while since your last website visit - check out our [Telelaget Store](#). Items available include six *Telelaget* publications, digital *Telesoga* issues (1980-2025) and hats, shirts, mugs, bags, and more!

