



TeleNews



NEWS FOR DESCENDANTS OF EMIGRANTS FROM THE TELEMAR REGION IN NORWAY

Volume XXVIII Number 2

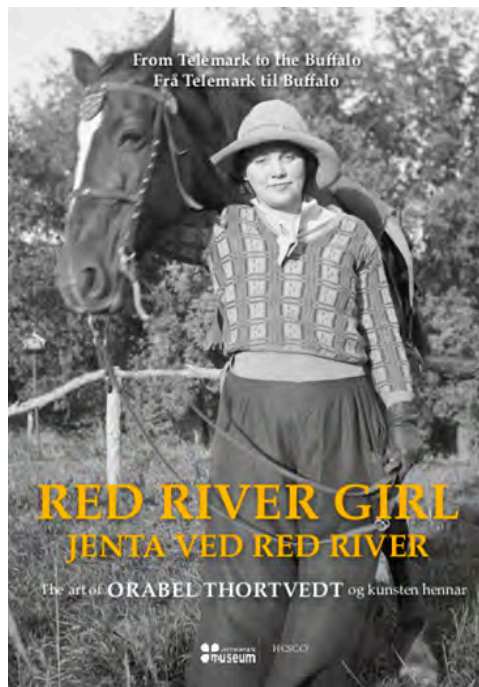
NOVEMBER 2020

Telelaget has become the distributor in the United States for the newly published "Red River Girl—the Art of Orabel Thortvedt." The main section of the book tells a story of emigration from Telemark, Norway to Houston County, Minnesota at the outset of the Civil War, and subsequent settlement along the Buffalo River near Moorhead, Minnesota in the Red River Valley. as told through the lives and experiences of one man, Ole G. Thortvedt, and his extended family and friends.

This remarkable book heralds the completion of an interesting and exciting venture involving Ole's granddaughter, Orabel, and ultimately Ole himself and his contemporaries. The West-Telemark Museum at Eidsborg, in conjunction with The Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County in Minnesota (HCSCC), recently concluded an in-depth research project concerning Orabel Thortvedt and her life as an accomplished artist, writer and family historian, resulting in a traveling exhibit and this beautiful book.

This exceptional book can belong to you for only \$45.00, plus \$5.00 shipping if mailed. The coffee table-style, 9 ½ x 13 inch, hardcover book weighs in at over three pounds, and its 193 pages are printed on luxurious, semi-gloss, art silk paper, profusely illustrated with black & white and color photographs, including numerous scans of Orabel's artwork. The entire text appears in both English and Norwegian, so you can try your hand at reading Norsk, as well! Contact: Shelley Jerviss smjerv@goacentek.net or 507-459-2143 or P.O. Box 292, Houston MN 55943. There is a PDF file at the end of this article which will give you a preview of the book. Think Christmas! This book is a fantastic gift for anyone who loves art or stories of early Norwegian pioneers in America.

There is much more to the book than Orabel's stories and illustrations, by the inclusion of several well-researched



and written articles, which while scholarly are also very accessible to the average reader. These contributors include Tillman Hartenstein, educational programs coordinator at the West-Telemark Museum, Dag Rorgemoen, director of the West Telemark Museum, Mark Peihl, senior archivist at HCSCC, and Lene Teigland Kleivi, archivist and collections manager at the W-T Museum. Telelaget of America's own Historian, Jim Skree provides background information on Houston's early history, emphasizing the decade that the Thortvedt, Gedstad, and Gundersen families lived here: 1861-1871. Gunnar Midtgarden, a cousin of Jim Skree from Fyresdal, tells about his visits with Orabel and her family in 1978 and 1981.

Another significant and beneficial aspect of this book is that it can serve as a vicariously revealing and rewarding stand-in for those who do not have a written history of their own. After all, the experiences of all the pioneers who came to this part of the country at that time were basically the same, no matter their ethnic or racial heritage. They all had to face the same ordeals and adversities, suffering and privations, and of course accomplishments and joys, as they struggled to make a new and better-quality life for themselves and their successors. As those interested in our ancestry, especially, we owe a great debt to Orabel Thortvedt. She and her incredible lifetime of work have long been known in rather limited circles, but with the release of West Telemark Museum's critically acclaimed book, she now belongs to the world.

Visit our website, www.Telelaget.com for additional information about the book. Click on "more" under "Publications" in the left column, and then scroll down to "Red River Girl." To see actual pages of the book, go to <http://www.telelaget.com/redriversample.pdf>.



This year, the Seven *Lag Stevne* celebrates the addition of Agder *Lag* by adding a "+" to its name. The 7+ *Lag Stevne* welcomes Agder!

The *stevne* is a yearly gathering of descendants of Norwegian immigrants to the US and Canada from eight areas of Norway (from parts of historical Buskerud, Vestfold, Oppland, and all of Telemark and Agder counties). Our *stevne* (a Norwegian word pronounced "stev-neh" that means gathering or reunion) is open to anyone interested in Norwegian history and heritage. Each of the sponsoring *lag* (a Norwegian word pronounced like log meaning organization or team) works to maintain cultural ties to its ancestral community and provides support for genealogical research.

The eight *lags* are the very best source for assistance in locating your ancestors in our organizational areas, but we can offer general help if you know anything about your Norwegian immigrant ancestor ... and the 7+ *Lag Stevne* offers much more! Classes in genealogical research, immigrant history on both sides of the Atlantic, music and entertainment, vendors there's so much to see and do at the *stevne*! If you love being a Norski, you'll love being a part of our celebration!

At the time of printing, "Vikings, Empire of the North" is scheduled from July 15-18 in Duluth, MN. NSI (National *Stevner*, Inc., the umbrella organization for the 7-*Lag Stevne*) will continue to look at social distancing guidelines and make determinations as to how or if the *stevne* happens. Keep up to date on the 7+ *Lag Stevne* website www.7lagstevne.com or 7-*Lag Stevne* on Facebook.




Welcome to the following people who have joined Telelaget since May, 2020

Elizabeth Blaszcak, Mercer Island WA
 Carol Mangold, Plymouth MN
 Barbara Baker, Frost MN
 Elisabeth Gatlin, Holmdel NJ
 Susan Kirkeby, Spokane WA
 Curtis Larson, Forman ND
 Holly Onyon-Meany, Brookfield IL
 Peggy Russell, Salem, OR



How You Can Support Telelaget of America

- Telelaget of America is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. A bequest is a simple way to support Telelaget of America and ensure that the *lag* can continue to celebrate our Telemark Norwegian heritage.
- Consider gifting a membership in Telelaget of America as a way to introduce a friend or family member to our *Lag*.
- 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 and click on "Making a Difference" for more information or to direct Choice Dollars,
- When you shop on Amazon, start at smile.amazon.com. and select Telelaget. Amazon donates 0.5% of your eligible purchases to Telelaget. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.



A Call for Telesoga Articles

Torkel Oftelie, co-fouder of Telelaget and first editor of *Telesoga*, traveled throughout the Midwest documenting the lives of emigrants from Telemark. In the spirit of Torkel and those who followed him, we are intent on keeping the memory of our Telemark ancestry and heritage alive with submissions to the *Telesoga* from our members. Please submit your Telemark-related story! Basics for submitting an article are:

- Articles can be of any length but with a Telemark connection
- Submission deadlines are mid-March for the May issue and mid-September for the November issue
- Email the editor with your story or send it through the postal service. Don't forget pictures.

- If you have a story to tell, but aren't sure you have the skills to tell it very well, just write it up as best you can. We have several members in our lag who will help you "polish it."

Fellesraad Update on the Archive and Bibliotek at Norway House

Elaine Haselton - September 2020

We are making solid progress toward finalizing the design of the John Haugo Bibliotek and Archive at Norway House! We have worked and reworked the floor plan and design several times for this new area, and we think the final design is going to work well for individuals and groups, both young and old, who visit there.

There are two sections of this facility:

1) The climate-controlled Archive will be in the north end and will have movable shelving and computer workstations. At the Information desk, there will be a scanner and printer available. All *Bygdelag* will have priority to place their genealogical collections, including *Bygdebøker*. The advantage is to preserve these and make them available year-round. Of course, *Lag* materials can be checked out for their *Stevne*.

2) The Bibliotek Discovery area will be a modern interactive area with numerous “stations.” It will be a discovery experience. These are some of them: Emigration & Immigration; Famous Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans; Norwegian-American and Norwegian-Canadian Settlements; A “Record My Story” area for recording and preserving our family histories.

The southeast corner will be an Activity area where a person can learn such things as Where Do I Come From; All About Me; How Do I Look in My Ancestors' Shoes.

A DNA area will be included, with explanatory DNA info. Our tentative plan is to provide a method to purchase DNA kits at the Bibliotek.

A multi-purpose room will be available for groups and families. We will have an Alcove to place monitors with pertinent information in the tunnel leading from the current Albert H. Quie Education Building to the Archive and Bibliotek in the Events Building.

You may ask yourself: “How can I assist with this huge undertaking?” We need you! You are the ones who know your geographical localities. First, share your *Bygdelag* charter members and famous Norwegians information.

[Telelaget has formed a committee to gather information on famous, deceased, Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans. If you have a family member or know of someone who should be included in the Bibliotek Discovery Center, please contact one of the committee members: Elaine Nordlie, Jeff Huset, Madelyn Krinke or Jim Skree. Their contact information is on page 4 of your Telesoga.]

If you have information on Norwegian settlements in the U.S. or Canada, that is critically needed. The more we populate these databases, the better the whole discovery experience will be in the Bibliotek.

If you want to volunteer, please contact me at hasleton@familysearch.org or eehasleton@gmail.com or by cell phone 801-718-0379.

Above you will see several photos which Telelag member Jessica Bunderson took of her children and their cousins at the Lehi Discovery Center. [These photos are used with her permission.] We envision the Bibliotek at Norway House to have many of these same features!



I'm Related to These Famous People



Experiencing the discovery experience with Grandma and Grandpa.



My Ancestors Came From These Countries & Settled at These Places

Dennis
Gordon
Johnson



September 20, 1940
August 25, 2020

You will read a bit about Telelag member, Dennis Johnson in the Genealogy Corner in this issue of Telesoga. Dennis was born September 20, 1940 in Fergus Falls, Minnesota and was raised on an 80 acre dairy farm by Elmer Gordon Johnson and Mary Evelyn (Muckala) Johnson in Tordenskjold Township, Ottertail County, Minnesota. The atmosphere reflected hard work and strong social conscience. He attended rural school district 95 for 8 years and along with his family was a member of Tordenskjold Lutheran Free Church. He attended West Central School of Agriculture (WCSA) in Morris in 1953. He graduated and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the infantry in 1962.

To his great good fortune he met and fell in love with Carole Arlene Petersen of Grenora, North Dakota who he pursued with determination and they were married on December 27, 1964. In 1969 David Johannes was born followed by Mary Ellyn in 1972.

In 1968 Dennis was appointed Dairy Scientist at the West Central School and Experiment Station Morris and Carole accepted a position teaching Home Economics at Hancock High School. A dairy scientist is responsible for applied research in dairy production and outreach education on dairy production. His efforts regarding world hunger were associated with nearly 20 years as synod coordinator for the ELCA hunger appeal. Dennis was deeply committed to serving his community, some of the many included First Lutheran Church in Morris, MN, the Land Stewardship Committee and the Vesterheim Museum in Decorah Iowa where he served on the board.

Dennis' table prayer always ended with these words: "Blessed be God who is our bread, may all the world be clothed and fed."

Gingerbread Wonderland Viewing for Everyone



Gingerbread (or in Norwegian, *pepperkake*) is a quintessential feature of the Norwegian holiday season. You will find gingerbread cookies, ornaments, and houses everywhere—in offices, stores, homes, and schools. Some towns and cities in Norway even go so far as to build replicas of their own city out of gingerbread!

Norway House and our warm family, friends, and community members are creating a Gingerbread Wonderland city in our gallery—a tradition we have come to love, and one that will soon be a part of your family's annual holiday to-do list, too!

TUNE IN ONLINE!

For the first time, Gingerbread Wonderland will be available online for the world to see! Starting December 6, 2020 the entire exhibit will be recorded and on display for public viewing. Go to www.norwayhouse.org and click on Gingerbread Wonderland in the menu bar at the top of the page.

Accessing the exhibit will be free, however we greatly appreciate your donation. A significant amount of our Annual Budget is based off of funds raised during Gingerbread Wonderland. Any amount you're able to contribute is helpful.

If you are in the Minneapolis, Minnesota area and would like to visit the display in person, please check the website for admission costs, social distancing guidelines and to schedule a viewing appointment.



Here are a few suggestions to help make your time at home during winter and the pandemic interesting, entertaining – and perhaps even productive.

www.conferencekeeper.org Conference Keeper curates and calendars the dates and details of genealogy and family history conferences, seminars, workshops, and other events.

<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/norway/> You can spend hours on this website with links to articles and videos about travel, attractions and life in Norway.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73L14OiliCo> takes you on a nearly one hour trip on the Telemark Canal.

www.martinroe.com is a blog called "Norwegian Genealogy and then some." The website is filled with articles, videos and photos as well as genealogy hints and help.