

NORWEGIAN TEXTILE LETTER

Vol. IV No. 3

May, 1998

**Talk presented by Barb Follett Schweger
at the
The Norwegian Breakfast Club's Conference on Norwegian Woven
Textiles October 23-25, 1997**

"From Minnesota to Alberta: Norwegian Immigrants and their textiles"

I am pleased to be here at Vesterheim. Thank you for inviting me. Five days ago I arrived in Decorah. During the first days I was taking a Rutevev class taught by Syvilla Tweed Bolson and Jan Mostrum and the last two days I have been listening to the wonderful talks presented at this conference. There have been great discussions about fibers from "primitive" Norwegian sheep, handwoven wool sails, lichen dyes, Norwegian yarns, traditional woven textiles made both in North America and Norway, and lots of discussion by "fiber people" about the world in general. As I have been digesting these topics I have started to mull over what I think may be an interesting difference between the way Norwegian-Americans and the way Norwegian-Canadians view their Norwegian cultural heritage and, thus also, their textile heritage.

Ten years ago Aagot Noss, of the Norwegian Folk Museum, visited Alberta and Saskatchewan and met with people interested in Norwegian textiles and costume. Heather Prince was just completing a M.Sc. thesis on Norwegian clothing and textiles in the community of Valhalla Centre, Alberta (1) and I had been studying textiles and other items in the Farvalden Collection housed at the Provincial Museum of Alberta. Our conclusions were summarized in the book Norwegian Immigrant Clothing and Textiles (2). This book was reviewed in a past issue of the Norwegian Textile Letter so I do not wish to say more about it here except that this work stimulated my interest in characterizing immigration and the role of certain textiles in purveying cultural meaning. I think I have gained a new perspective in the first days of this conference. On impulse, I am going to go beyond the boundaries of the Upper Midwest and the Prairie Provinces of Canada in my talk today in an attempt to initiate a dialogue on similarities and differences in the "national character" of Norwegian-heritage immigrants and the textiles they choose to emphasize in their cultural heritage.

I will begin by noting the movement of Norwegians across Canada to the Midwest and, later, north to the province of Alberta. In the process, I will show only a few slides of handwoven Norwegian-heritage textiles. Rather, I wish to demonstrate that Norwegian immigrants living in the Upper Midwest and those living in the western Canadian provinces experienced a different migration history. I believe that this is likely to affect the view by each regarding important aspects of their cultural heritage. Second, I will suggest that the view of the stereotypic "Norwegian" may differ in the USA and in Canada. If there really is this difference, what does it have to do with us at a conference on Norwegian handweaving? I hope the slides that I present as I speak will set you to thinking about this.

The move by Norwegians to the USA is well described by Odd Lovoll in his comprehensive book The Promise of America. A History of the Norwegian-American People.(3) However, there is more to the story and this pertains to Canada. Some Norwegians who came to the Upper Midwest migrated a second time, beginning in the 1890s when homesteading lands opened up in western Canada. The numbers who left Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Dakotas for the Canadian Prairies were not large, relative to the population that remained in these states. However, because the Canadian provinces were so sparsely populated these immigrants from the USA had a large impact on the cultural mosaic of western Canada. This aspect of the story of Norwegian immigration is documented by Gulbrand Loken in his book From Fjord to Frontier. A history of the Norwegians in Canada. (4) Much of my

discussion of Norwegian immigration to Canada is based upon his research.

In the mid-19th century many USA-bound Norwegian immigrants arrived in the Midwest through Canada. It is interesting to compare the number who disembarked at Quebec with the number of those who came directly to the USA by way of New York. Take the 1850s, for example (Loken, Table 1, p. 14.)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Quebec arrivals</u>	<u>New York arrivals</u>
1850	250	3,150
1851	225	2,112
1852	2,317	1,889
1853	5,056	377
1854	5,663	81
1855	1,290	203
1856	2,830	438
1857	6,416	62
1858	2,656	3
1859	<u>1,757</u>	<u>36</u>
Decade total	28,460	8,351

In the mid-19th century Canada served primarily as an immigration corridor for immigrants from Norway. In that century half a million Norwegians traveled through Canada but very few stayed. In fact, a Canadian Special Committee on Emigration was formed to try to find a way to entice Norwegians to remain in Canada because Norwegians were considered to be very desirable settlers. By the end of the century there was much greater interest among Norwegians to live in Canada. When homesteading opened up in western Canada, a number of settlers who had gone to the USA and had lived there for a time, chose now to head north and take advantage of the lands

being offered. From 1890 until World War II Alberta was considered to be a prime agricultural frontier. Thus, those interested in seeking a "new" frontier picked up and came to Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Loken writes that between 1900-1910 44% of the homesteaders to Western Canada came from the USA and a great many of these were Norwegian. Some were mired in agricultural crises with mounting debts and other economic problems. They saw Canada as a second chance. Others who again sought "life on the frontier" (and all of the adventure this implied) also took advantage of this opportunity to immigrate. Canadian agencies set up promotions in various towns to attract Nordic people to Canada because, as had been the case in the 1850s, Norwegians were viewed as ideal immigrants. Using Loken's figures (Table 17, p. 245), it is interesting to note the origin of Norwegians living in Canada, using the year 1921 as an example.

**Norwegians
in Canada**

<u>in 1921</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Born in Canada	23,568	34.2
Born in U.S.A.	22,186	32.2
Born elsewhere	23,102	33.6

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the majority of Norwegians went to the two western provinces. If we again use the year 1921 as an example, we see (from Loken, p. 225, Table 14):

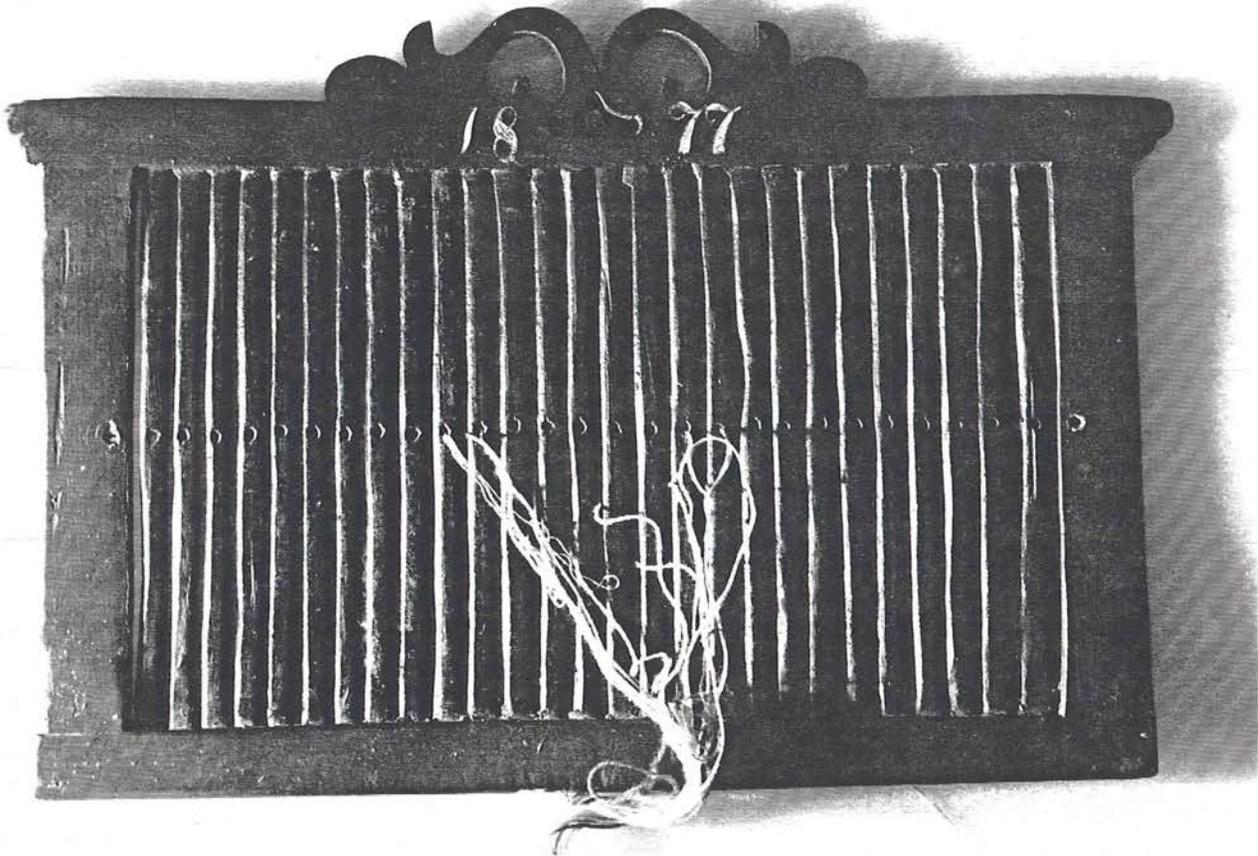
<u>Canadian Province</u>	<u>Number of Norwegians Settled in 1921</u>
British Columbia	6,570
Alberta	21,323
Saskatchewan	31,438
Manitoba	4,203
Ontario	3,416
Quebec	705
New Brunswick	588
Nova Scotia	482
Prince Edward Island	10
Newfoundland	--
Yukon	107
Northwest Territories	14

With Canadian Immigration officials actively recruiting in the Upper Midwest, as well as in European countries, the offer of free land encouraged moves to Canada by many Minnesota settlers. They could take a train to Alberta, called the Immigrant train, as far as the town of Westaskwin where there was an Immigration Hall. It was the point of embarkation for many settlers from Minnesota who chose to move to a large region southeast of Edmonton, an area whose "Norwegian focal point" soon became, and still is, the community of Camrose. As an example, we know that Crookston, MN, in 1892 had a Canadian Immigration office with a large wall poster advertising Canada. Though we could choose from many, let us consider the town of Bardo, Alberta. In 1893 a group of four men from Crookston were looking for land suited for the formation of a colony of settlers. They liked the looks of the area around what they later named Bardo (Note that Bardo was initially called Northern and Alberta at that time was still part of the Northwest Territories.) In 1894 they

returned with a group and homesteaded the area.

Do we understand the "textile activity" that took place in this new Norwegian settlement of Bardo? (5) We would assume that the settlers brought their Norwegian heritage preferences

retained by the family. These had been worn out or discarded well before this second leg of the immigration story, this journey to Alberta. This is why there is much value in studying genealogies and searching for pieces that remain in collections such as the Minnesota or the Wisconsin State Historical Society. It is one



This rigid heddle, showing an 1877 date, was brought to Alberta directly from Telemark, Norway, in the 1920's. It is housed in the collections of the Provincial Museum of Alberta.

and traditions with them. Did they bring prized Norwegian heirloom textiles? Examples of Norwegian handweaving? Textile working tools that had been used in Norway or Minnesota? This remains to be documented in detail. We know, generally speaking, that many textile items of Norwegian origin no longer were

way to document the material culture of Norwegians who took part in the migration to western Canada.

Norwegians who came to Alberta were considered to be relatively well-off, compared to the immigrants coming from Europe. Often

the Norwegians and the numerous Ukrainians, as well as those of other nationalities, lived in close proximity when reaching Alberta. We can not assume, of course, that all Norwegian immigrants to western Canada remained permanently. Some certainly returned to the USA. Interestingly, when I was shown the textile collection at the Polk County Museum in

discussion of Norwegian-immigrant textiles in Canada.

The Norwegian families who came to Alberta may have been in the USA for as many as fifty years. They already knew English and had already once experienced the "frontier" in the Upper Midwest. They may have studied, even



This is not what we might call a "traditional" Norwegian textile. Yet the coverlet is viewed by its owner as representing Scandinavian culture. Her Norwegian/Swedish parents probably brought it from Minnesota to their homestead located near Viking, Alberta, in the early 1920's.

Crookston, the discussion went in this direction, one woman said that all the Crookston immigrants had returned to Crookston, while another women said this was not the case because her relatives had remained in Alberta and were doing very well. Clearly, however, a significant number of Minnesota Norwegians remained in Alberta and this is important to any

formally, in the United States. Did using, or at least preserving, "traditional" textiles remain a high priority within the individual Norwegian home? Archival records and local turn-of-the-century newspapers provide little evidence of handwoven textiles being important. Whether or not Rights of Passage textiles such as baptismal gowns or coffin coverings continued

to be used within the privacy of one's home and church should be explored in depth. It does appear that in the early to mid-20th century there was, at best, disinterest in publicly using "folk" textiles and, at worst, there may have been disdain for their display. Even should this be the case, acknowledgment of the fine aesthetics of Norwegian weaving apparently was remembered by all. Knowledge of or regard for and placement of a high value on Norwegian textile traditions seems never to have been lost by Norwegian immigrants to Canada. This lack of visibility vs. being held in high esteem should not be seen as a contradiction. One way to explain it might be to think of the visual display of ethnicity through clothing and textiles as a "social detriment" in this new country. Norwegians were generally doing very well in their new home and undoubtedly were not interested in appearing to be foreign or eccentric, as newly arrived immigrants from eastern Europe were sometimes regarded.

At present the most detailed study of Norwegian immigrant textiles in Alberta is the 1988 Master's thesis by Heather Prince that has already been mentioned. There are other snippets of published materials that pertain to the textiles of Norwegian-heritage immigrants. Mostly these appear in local community histories or newspapers that reported on local Norwegian festivals. Almost always, the textile activity mentioned was sewing rather than handweaving; quilts were sewn rather than coverlets being woven in rutevev or rya, clothing was made of commercially purchased fabric rather than handwoven materials. Here is an example. In Amisk Creek, which is located near Ryley, Alberta, were Peder C. Moen and

his wife Pernette. They had come on the Immigrant Train from Grand Forks, Minnesota. "Mrs. Moen had a sewing machine and had brought a good supply of calicoes with her for which she had paid five cents a yard, the cost in Canada being about thirty cents" (6). Or, consider the Tosten Weflen family whose history is told by Daisy Lucas (7). Tosten Weflen and his son Andrew came to Crooked Lake, northeast of Westakwin in 1896. He and his wife Mary had come to Elden, Minnesota in 1863 from Norway. They raised a family of nine children in Minnesota. After Mary died, the family moved to South Dakota and then on to Canada. Sewing skills practiced by the women in this family are stressed in this interesting article by Lucas, but weaving is never mentioned.

A survey of Albertan locally written community histories indicates that in strongly Scandinavian areas (oftentimes one spouse was Norwegian and one Swedish, for example) home-sewing was common, with close-to, if not professional tailoring skills having been learned in the Upper Midwest before immigration to Canada. In rural areas flocks of sheep were kept, carding and spinning performed, and items knit for cold weather attire. (I can assume that a study of Norwegian textile equipment would surely prove fruitful in rural Alberta.) There is scattered evidence of the use of Norwegian folk costume for local Norse festivals, such as in Viking, Alberta in the 1920s (8) or larger festivals such as the 1937 Tri-Provincial (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) Norsk celebration held in Swift Current, Saskatchewan.

Cont'd on Pg. 9

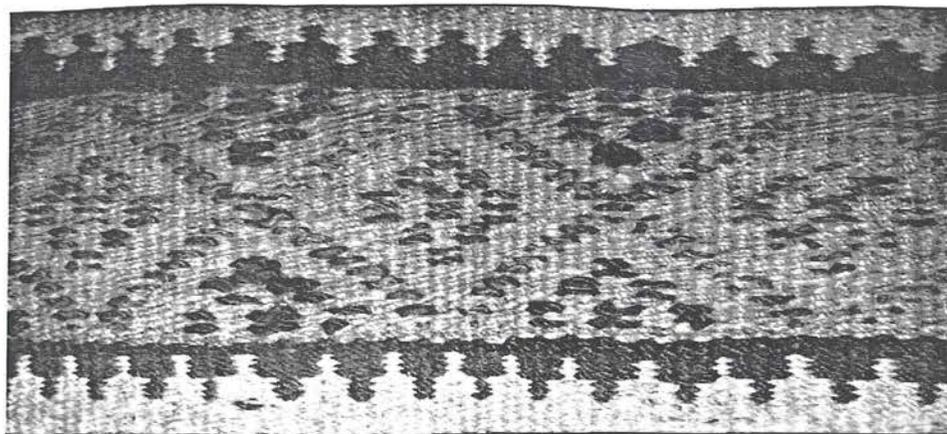
Mystery Coverlet

Laurann Gilbertson and Syvilla Tweed Bolson
Decorah, Iowa

In the last issue of Norwegian Textile Letter we introduced you to a special coverlet that was recently given to Vesterheim Museum. We invited you to weave an adaptation of that early coverlet from Stavanger, Norway, and gave the threading draft, tie-up, and two of the six different pattern bands. The third pattern band is offered here. This band of Vestfold technique appears three times and in three different color combinations on the coverlet.

Pattern	Band number
	heading cord
X	1
B	2
V	3
C	4
T	5
C	6
V	7
C	8
T	9
C	10
V	11
S	12

X - Xs
B - Boundweave / *krokbragd*
V - *Vestfold technique*
C - Crabs / *krabberender*
T - Old Lady's Teeth / *kjerringtenner*
S - Stripes



Vestfold technique (*vestfoldteknikk*) is a weft-faced textile with geometric inlay designs done in a variety of colors. The name is taken from the area in Norway where all of the coverlets of this technique were originally made. Only about a dozen coverlets, which were woven in the late 1700s and early 1800s, are in existence.

Follow the drawdown using doubled weft yarn (the same weight as the tabby weft yarn) for the Vestfold inlay. The technique is to use one strand doubled and inserted as a lark's head knot. This is done on a closed shed and is followed with a tabby shot of the background color, and then one or two more tabby rows of the background color. The number of tabby rows depends on the appearance of the inlay rows. The inlay rows should be close together, but not touching. Do not beat the inlay row. Wait and beat after you have woven the shot of tabby. Other important tips: work your inlay pattern yarns horizontally and never vertically or diagonally. Inlay yarns should float over no more than three warp ends, and count carefully. Note: It appears that in the old coverlet, a soft single-ply yarn was used for the inlay.

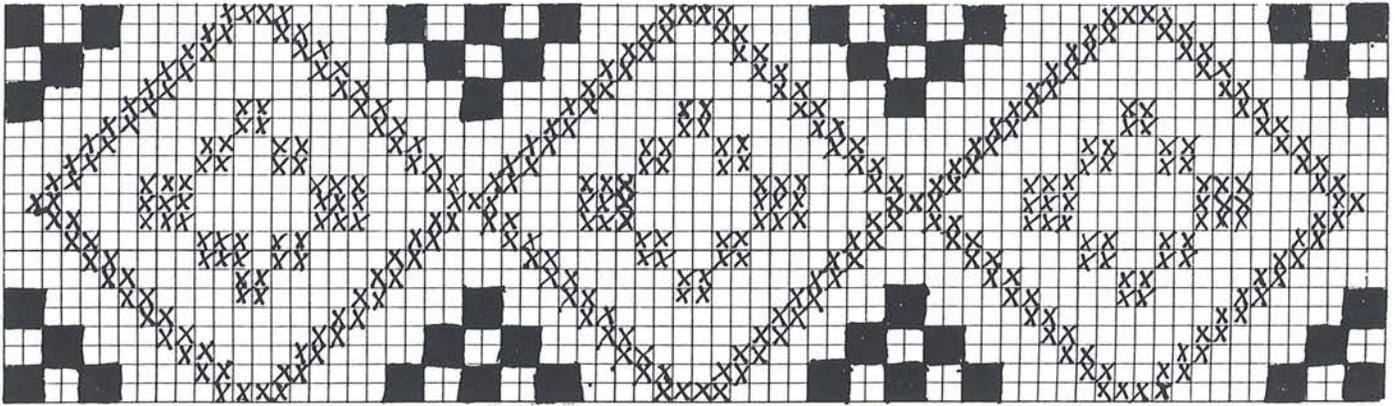
Explanation of *krokbragd* tie-up and treading:
Harnesses 2 and 4 can be tied-up together.

Treadle lifting 2, 3, 4 to cover all the 1s.
Treadle lifting 1 and 3 to cover 2s and 4s.
Treadle lifting 1, 2, 4 to cover all the 3s.



Drawdown for *krokbragd* border

Krokbragd colors: Use gray for □ in all bands.
In bands #3 & #11 use blue for ■, but use red for ■ in band #7.



Drawdown for Pattern V - Vestfold technique

Instructions: Pattern V - Vestfold

Band #3, originally 4 1/2" tall

- 1) Weave 14 shots (1/2") of gray in tabby.
- 2) Follow the drawdown for krokbragd on the previous page using blue and gray yarn, and repeat each sequence four times. Then weave four shots of blue tabby.

□	red
⊗	gray
■	blue

- 3) Continue to follow the Vestfold pattern drawdown. Please note color codes. The background is red, the main motifs of diamonds are gray, and the side triangles are blue. When the Vestfold band is finished, weave four shots of blue tabby.

- 4) Reverse the krokbragd drawdown using blue and gray yarn, then end with 14 shots (1/2") of gray in tabby.

Band #7, originally 4 1/2" tall

- 1) Weave 14 shots (1/2") of gray in tabby.
- 2) Follow the drawdown for krokbragd on the previous page using red and gray yarn, and repeat each sequence four times. Then weave four shots of red tabby.

□	blue
⊗	gold
■	red

- 3) Continue to follow the Vestfold pattern drawdown. Please note color codes. The background is blue, the main motifs of diamonds are gold, and the side triangles are red. When the Vestfold band is finished, weave four shots of red tabby.

- 4) Reverse the krokbragd drawdown using red and gray yarn, then end with 14 shots (1/2") of gray in tabby.

Band #11, originally 4 1/2" inches tall

- 1) Weave 14 shots (1/2") of gray in tabby.
- 2) Follow the drawdown for krokbragd on the previous page using blue and gray yarn, and repeat each sequence four times. Then weave four shots of blue tabby.

□	gold
⊗	red
■	blue

- 3) Continue to follow the Vestfold pattern drawdown. Please note color codes. The background is gold, the main motifs of diamonds are red, and the side triangles are blue. When the Vestfold band is finished, weave four shots of blue tabby.

- 4) Reverse the krokbragd drawdown using blue and gray yarn, then end with 14 shots (1/2") of gray in tabby.

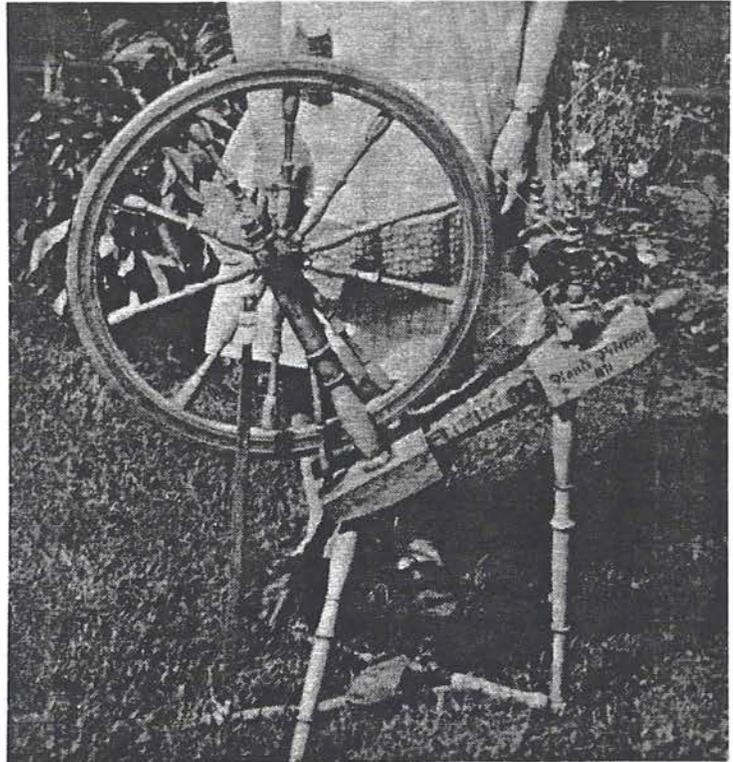
Next Time In the next newsletter, you will receive the drawdown and instructions for Pattern C, which is a variation on "crabs" or *krabberender*.

Cont'd from Pg. 6

Certainly, one can not deny that the use of folk costume when participating in Norwegian festivals indicated a celebration of culture identity at these homogenous ethnic events. Interestingly, however, instances appear rare in the early and mid-20th century of Norwegian dress being worn at multi-cultural events. Norwegian immigrants were rapidly and, I believe, easily Canadianized. They quickly assumed the role of respected farmers/ranchers in the rural areas and many were active urban business entrepreneurs. As a result, fashionably sewn North American styled clothing and household items were highly visible, the use of Norwegian dress and Norwegian textiles in the home was not. If one even owned traditional Norwegian dress it was most often reserved for selected Norwegian-focused occasions.

There appears to have been little or no interest by Norwegians in flagging themselves as members of a particular immigrant community (Remember all but the Native Indians were immigrants to Alberta at this time, be they from eastern Canada, the USA, or Europe). Items representing life in Norway decades before, or even life in Minnesota as a newly arrived North American immigrant, seem not to have been thought of as particularly relevant in the first half of the 20th century. My present opinion, after reviewing historic documentary sources, is that there was a purposeful downplaying of Norwegian traditions by Norwegian immigrants who came to Alberta from Minnesota and the Upper Midwest. In his study of the Bygdelag in America (9) Odd. S. Lovoll documented the

interest in formation of Norwegian associations and societies in western Canada. This seems not to have brought about a resurgence of Norwegian weaving. While carding wool and knitting mittens and scarves certainly played a part in the life of the Norwegian immigrants to Alberta, the same was the case in the lives of neighboring immigrants from other countries.



The "migration history" of this spinning wheel is typical. It is believed to have been made in Norway, used in Minnesota, and later brought to Alberta by Norwegian-American immigrants.
Private owner.

The dual aspect of both a new northern farming frontier and of a new business environment served to enhance the sense of adventure for those contemplating a move north to Canada. The significant role by Norwegians in the Alberta business community was a strong factor early in this century. It may also have impacted

on the type of and style of home furnishings and textiles chosen, possibly initiating a growing difference in the Norwegian-American and the Norwegian-Canadian aesthetic and their interests in specific textiles. I will use the Eau Claire Lumber Company and Gilbert Berg as an example.

In 1886 a group of Norwegians came from Wisconsin to Calgary to organize and work in the Eau Claire Lumber Company (10) which, in the 1890s, was the largest producer of lumber in the Northwest Territories of Canada. Clearly, this Norwegian-American business endeavor was highly important in the economy of southern Alberta at a time when settlement by European-heritage people was just beginning in this part of Canada. Eau Claire Lumber Company employees, who were among the first permanent residents of Calgary, had considerable direct, daily contact with the Sarcee Indian population. (I believe it would be of considerable interest for someone to learn more about Norwegian-Indian social contacts and its effect on textiles and clothing in the Norwegian-Canadian community.) Gulbrand Berge (soon Gilbert Berg), who had come to Alberta with the Eau Claire colony in 1886, moved north to Edmonton in the 1890s. He established the first general store in this city. Thus, we have a Norwegian businessman initially choosing and supplying the merchandise needs of the Norwegian immigrant community, their fabrics and their tools. The question then becomes whether or not British Victorian fashion or traditional Norwegian handwork dominated the decor in the Norwegian-Canadian home. To what extent did Victorian tastes in this British Commonwealth country of

Canada affect Norwegian immigrant aesthetics?

More data are being compiled at this time on Norwegian immigrant textile history in Alberta. I would like to call your attention to the Central Alberta Regional Museums Network (known as CARMN), based at Red Deer Museum but headed by David Goa, Curator of Folk Life at the Provincial Museum of Alberta in Edmonton. Under CARMN, researchers are documenting Norwegian crafts and the craft community in central Alberta, including Norwegian textiles past and present. My own query into handweaving traditions brought to Alberta from the USA has generated interesting Norwegian family histories and occasional heirloom textiles. (It is not uncommon, however, for these heirlooms to be of questionable Norwegian origin.) The work of CARMN should greatly expand our knowledge of Norwegian textile history in Alberta.

It appears, at least initially in this highly qualitative survey of mine, that as much interest and many more examples of Norwegian handweaving are in non-Norwegian homes. Persons interested in the textile arts, especially those who have had the opportunity to travel to Norway, have collected interesting examples of weaving. Within the Norwegian community there appears to be fewer pieces of handweaving, with the possible exception of pillow covers, but a greater representation of Hardanger embroidery and bunads made of commercially woven fabrics. I do perceive a particular awareness of Norwegian Sami weaving among Albertans who are interested in textiles, partly because Canada and Norway are both geographically northern countries, partly because Edmonton weaver/weaving-teacher

Pirkko Karvonen, a Finnish-Canadian, has taught and lectured locally on Sami weaving, and partly because several Sami exhibits that have included weaving have been displayed at local museums in the last decade. Canadians are interested in the Sami reindeer herders who attempted to introduce a herd in arctic Canada. Edmontonians have invited Sami folk singers to conferences such as "Northern Cities" and to the annual Edmonton Folk Festival. Why should there not also be a fascination with weaving from northern Norway?

Let us follow up on the idea of "sense of adventure" as significant in the Norwegian-Canadian subculture. Possibly this is more important than is placement at the higher end of the social-economic hierarchy in early Alberta when one seeks to interpret the Norwegian-Canadian cultural identity. I have been considering "sense of adventure" as a significant factor when distinguishing a seemingly different focus by Norwegian-Americans and Norwegian-Canadians. Possibly, "sense of adventure" may impact on the manner in which Norwegian textiles are discussed and considered by non-weavers and weavers alike in Canada.

At the time that Norwegians were flocking into Alberta from the USA the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen was completing his journey through the Northwest Passage across arctic Canada. The celebration of his success was held in Ramparts, Yukon. Meanwhile, his cousin Ole Jacob Amundsen, a cabinet maker from Oslo, had emigrated to North Dakota in 1894 and then to Alberta in 1901. This was also considered "an adventure" by the family of Ole Jacob. (A tribute building to the Alberta Amundsen's called "Amundsen's General Store"

is in Heritage Park in Calgary.) As I think back, when I have spoken to Norwegians and non-Norwegians about his or her view of Norwegian history in North America it has often brought to mind the activities of adventurers and explorers, not that of lonely farmsteads on a windswept prairie. It is of arctic exploration and ships in icy waters rather than plowing and agriculture though, I would guess, many more Norwegian-Canadians practice inland farming than fishing and sailing in the coastal waters.

Some Canadians are aware of the Norwegian Jens Munk and his place in Canadian exploration history. Jens Munk, born in 1579 in Arendal, Norway, was a navigator for Christian IV of Denmark who was seeking the Northwest Passage across Canada. After uncomfortably spending a winter on the west coast of Hudson Bay in 1619-1620, he and the only two other survivors made their way back to Scandinavia. The journals of his expedition in search of the Northwest Passage survive and are published in English translation (11)

Examples of textile heritage of Norwegian-Canadians are tucked away in the Folk Life section of the Museum of Civilization located in Hull, Quebec, or in Folk Culture sections of various provincial museums. There is no Norwegian showcase such as the Norwegian-American Museum here in Decorah. However, a very visible public representation of historic Norse culture is at the Canadian National Historic Site at L'Anse Meadows, Newfoundland (12). It celebrates the 1100 A.D. Viking settlers on the east coast of present-day Canada. Interpreters place particular emphasis on textile activities, such as wool (apparently from modern Canadian

breeds), preparation spinning, and textile production in the daily lives of Vikings. The spindle whorls found in the archaeological excavations and evidence of Norse textile production represent maritime Norse activity 900 years ago in Canada.

I am not trying to convince you that Norwegian-Canadians have a greater appreciation or greater interest in Vikings and in the travels adventures of the Norse than do Norwegian-Americans. I am suggesting, however, that many Canadians may think of L'Anse Meadows or the Northwest Passage first when thinking of the activities of Norwegians and the migration of their traditions. I do not believe that Norwegians are particularly thought of as rural settlers in Canada, no more so than any other ethnic group would be. I do not think that Norwegian handweaving would be thought to represent activity in rural households and on subsistence farms. At the moment, I THINK that I think that Canadian-Norwegians and other Canadians attribute to Norwegians a particular adventuring spirit. This would be a kind of Fridtjof Nansen spirit, that of explorer, scholar, humanitarian, and risk-taking adventurer. The numerous instances in which active Norwegians have had cultural contacts with Canadian Native peoples, Indian and Inuit, in the western Canadian prairie farm/ranching regions and in the far North may contribute to this characterization. How does all of this impact on Norwegian immigrants and their handwoven textiles? There are numerous avenues for research that could serve to clarify the picture. Did Jens Munk use wool sails? Did whalers and fishermen use handwoven boat rugs on the coastal waters of North America?

Did Indian and Inuit contact affect Norwegian folk art in Canada?

What my aim has been in this digression that has taken us far beyond "From Minnesota to Alberta: Norwegian Immigrants and their Textiles" is to suggest that the story of Norwegian immigrants to the USA. is not the full story of Norwegian activity in North America. The stereotypic picture of Norwegians in Minnesota, presented in such a wonderful manner through Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon (13), may not be so perfectly clear north of the border. It could be that a "Sergeant Preston in the Yukon" portrait would serve almost as well in central Alberta and further north. This different emphasis, I believe, results in a different focus on textiles when interpreting Norwegian cultural history in these two North American countries. Possibly the Norwegian-American is more highly tuned to the weaving that comes from the central highland regions of Norway, e.g., Telemark, Hallingdal, Numedal, Valdres, and Gudbrandsdalen, while the Norwegian-Canadian has a bit more focus on the Norwegian districts to the north of Trondheim. All of this demands far more research.

In the last two decades in Canada, as in the USA, there has been increased interest in ethnic identity and ethnic markers. Canada has a wealth of highly skilled weavers, as does the USA. The interest in beautiful, traditional Norwegian handwoven textiles has escalated in both countries, but so far I fail to see that the interest in Norwegian textiles is any stronger in the Norwegian community than it is in the more general weaving/textile arts community.

I would like to see greater exploration of the diversity of Norwegian culture in all of North America. I would love to hear more discussion on the textiles from all regions of Norway and the various locales in North America. I think we should do more in analyzing the social-cultural aspects of Norwegian textiles and the degree to which they fulfill a role in cultural identity in the USA and in Canada..

Thanks for your attention!

ENDNOTES

- 1). Heather Prince. 1988. Norwegian clothing and textiles in Valhalla Centre, Alberta: A case study and inventory in an ecomuseum framework. M.Sc. thesis. University of Alberta.
- 2). Catherine C. Cole [Ed.] 1990. Norwegian Immigrant Clothing and Textiles Edmonton [Alberta, Canada]: Prairie Costume Society
- 3). Odd S. Lovoll. 1984 The Promise of America. A History of the Norwegian-American People Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press in cooperation with The Norwegian-American Historical Association.
- 4) Gulbrand Loken. 1980. From Fjord to Frontier. A history of the Norwegians in Canada. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd. in association with the Multiculturalism Directorate, Department o the Secretary of State and the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada. See also: Jan Harold Brunvand. 1974. Norwegian settlers in Alberta. Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies. Paper No. 8. Ottawa: National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada; Ragna Steen and Magda Hendrickson. 1944. Pioneer Days in Bardo, Alberta. Tofield [Alberta]: Historical Society of Beaver Hills Lake.
- 5) In a sense this has been studied for in 1912 a missionary/minister took his family from Bardo and moved 400 miles north to form Valhalla, the community in which Heather Prince based her study of Norwegian clothing and textiles.
- 6). See page 125 in Beaver Tales History of Ryley & District. 1979. Calgary: Friesen Printers. Other useful local histories include: . Early History of Camrose, Alberta, and District. Camrose Historical Society. 1947. Souvenir for the fortieth anniversary of Camrose. Published by the Camrose Historical Society; Viking in Profile. A book of a lifetime. 1991. Viking History Committee c/o Ellen Loveseth. Vol. I
- 7). Daisy Lucas. 1993. A Pioneer Norwegian Family. Alberta History. Vol. 41. No. 4 Pages 16-19.
- 8). Page 1500, Viking in Profile.
- 9) Odd S. Lovoll. 1975. A Folk Epic: The Bygdelag in America. Twayne Publishers for the Norwegian-American Historical Association.
- 10) An interesting fictionalized account of this Wisconsin lumber company is in Sons of the Old Country by Waldemar Ager. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1983.

11) Jens Munk. 1980. The Journal of Jens Munk, 1616-1620. Edited by W.A. Kenyon. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum.

12) See Magnus Magnusson and Herman Palsson (trans.) The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America. London: Penquin Books; Helge Ingstad. 1969. Westward to Vinland. New York: St. Martin's Press; Anne Stine Ingstad. 1977. The Discovery of a Norse Settlement in America. Excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland. 1961-1968. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

13) Garrison Keillor. 1985. Lake Wobegon Days. New York: Viking.

POSTSCRIPT

Barb reports that while there was much silence immediately after this talk was presented it generated interesting discussion that evening and the days that followed as she took Lila Nelson's post conference weaving course. Stories came out about various relatives and their move north to Canada, sometimes returning back to the Midwest and sometimes not.

REMINDER FOR NBC MEMBERS

We would like to remind all NBC members that the breakfast meeting in Atlanta is Friday, July 24. The time is 7 to 9 a.m. (This information was incorrectly noted in the Convergence registry.)

SPECIAL EVENTS COLUMN

NBC members Janet Meany, Sally Scott and I

will travel to north Minnesota in early June to register two collections of Norwegian textiles plus several old Norwegian looms, one of which is said to be an upright. We will also assist in getting the Norwegian loom in the Todd County Historical Museum at Long Prairie in working order.

Ars Textrina's 16th Annual Conference on Textiles and Costume (June 26-28 at the University of Wisconsin in Madison) will include several presentations related to our interests: Laurann Gilbertson on the iconography of a Gerhard Munthe tapestry, Larry Schmitt on the ancient looping technique nalbinding, and I on diversity in coverlet tradition of rural Norway.

At the 25th Nordic Brunch in Minneapolis, an annual Vesterheim fund-raiser, Laurann Gilbertson lectured on "Dating Historical Photographs Using Women's Clothing, 1860-1920" and "Norwegian Folk Costumes A Living Collection". A danskbrogd wall hanging which I wove and donated for auction garnered \$700 for Vesterheim's textile acquisition fund.

I have two requests. One is for information on any events, exhibits, classes, etc. in your area which might interest NBC members as well as information on any Norwegian textiles in private ownership. The second is for assistance in my search for another copy of Helen Engelstad's **DOBBELTVEV I NORGE**. The only one of which I'm aware is at Vesterheim. An English translation would be marvelous, but the book does have an excellent English summary.

Lila Nelson

CONGRATULATIONS!

NBC member, Jo Nilsson has had an article entitled "Wisdom and Folly: Norwegian Pictorial Coverlets" published in **HALI**

magazine, Jan. 1998 issue. Jo donated a copy of the magazine to Vesterheim library. Congratulations Jo.

BOOK REVIEW

Åse Emmilie Øy's *Åkletradisjonen i Åmli* is a treat. This little book (66 pages) is filled with color photographs of coverlets from Åmli in Aust Agder. Weavers selected bright jewel-tone yarns for rutevev coverlets with borders on all four sides. The Telemarkstepper are equally vivid. The colors in the krokbragd coverlets are more subtle, but bands of lynild or lightening make two textiles from Tovdal exciting. Øy also includes short discussions and photos of tools, dyestuffs, kviteler (twill bed sheets), ryer, and skillbragd coverlets. This is an excellent book for anyone wanting to expand their references to Norwegian weaving techniques, motifs, and colors. Available from the Vesterheim Gift Shop (1-800-979-3346) for \$27.90 for museum members, \$31.00 for non-members, plus approximately \$3 for shipping.

Laurann Gilbertson

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Classes/Workshops

DYE WORKSHOP

A comprehensive class for intermediate and experienced natural dyers will be held at the Humboldt Institute (a.k.a. "Eagle Hill") from August 30 to September 6, 1998, at Steuben, Maine (40 minute drive, northeast of Ellsworth). Join Karen Diadick Casselman to explore forest and field and learn how to identify plants and lichen to make ethical natural dyes from Maine bounteous late-summer flora. Daily dye sessions, individual and group

projects, discussions, library sessions and slide presentations amplify field trips and forays. Class is suitable for dyers, knitters, weavers, spinners; paper, basket, rug, and quiltmakers; and for textile historians and conservators. Gourmet food in a rustic but comfortable setting; many types of on-site accommodation from tenting to cabin with bath and fireplace. Limited class size. University credits can be arranged. Contact director Jeorg-Henner Lotze, P.O. Box 9, Dyer Bay Road, Steuben Maine, 04680-0009; or email humboldt@nemaine.com

CLASSIFIEDS:

C'est Madeleine



Quality Supplies

for your Special Tapestry, Rug
or Handweaving Projects

Free Brochure

Norwegian Spelsau Tapestry Yarns
in 121 Colours, (Samples \$10.)

Portable Tapestry Looms, \$25. - 45.00

Tapestry Books & Handmade Bobbins

Spelsau White & Grey Wool Warp

Original Tapestry Kits

Instruction ◆ Mail Order ◆ Samples

VISA & MASTERCARD

Your Time is worth only the Best Quality!

Madeleine Darling-Tung

40 Moore Avenue, Guelph, ON

N1G 1R4 Canada

Tel: 519-821-4404; Fax: 519-821-2912

e-mail: mm.tung@sympatico.ca

CLASSIFIEDS - (Cont'd)

TWEEDS and FLEECE

512 Locust Road
Decorah, IA 52101

(319) 382-3711

smtweed@salamander.com

Open by appt., mail order

business, specializing in *Norwegian*

Raumagarn and Roros-Tweed

spælsau wool yarns for weavers

and knitters. Equipment for

weavers and spinners. SASE for info

Proprietor: **Syvilla Tweed Bolson**

**TWO DYE MONOGRAPHS
AVAILABLE IN THE
STUDIO VISTA MONOGRAPH SERIES**

1. *LICHEN DYES: A SOURCE BOOK*. Softcover, 57 pages, 20,000 words. History and use of 150 lichen dyes from 13 countries. 10 charts; glossary; international bibliography; indices. US price \$16.00 + \$4.00 s & h; Canadian \$15.00 + \$3.00 s & h.

2. *NATURAL DYES OF THE ASIA PACIFIC*. Softcover, 47 pages; 15,000 words. Ethnology and anthropology of many cultures plus 100 common dye plants. Charts, international bibliography; index. US orders: \$14.00 + \$3.00 s & h. Canadian orders \$12.00 + \$2.00 s & h.