

# Bygdelagenes Fellesraad, Bygdelag, and Norsk Slektshistorisk Forening Partnership

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The partnership between the Bygdelagenes Fellesraad (representing the 29 Bygdelag) and Norsk Slektshistorisk Forening represents a major bonding between the two organizations on both sides of the ocean.

The Bygdelagenes Fellesraad was founded on 12 November 1916 in Minnesota. It is the umbrella organization for the twenty-nine Bygdelag, each based on a different geographical area in Norway. Some of the Bygdelags were established earlier than the Fellesraad, such as the Valdres Samband founded in 1899 in Minneapolis, and Trønderlag founded in 1908 in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

The founders of these Bygdelag organizations were initially the immigrants themselves who organized to “retain their original identity and a strong emotional attachment to their local home area in Norway.”<sup>1</sup> When these immigrants passed away, their children and other descendants took over the Bygdelag movement.

Today Bygdelag members are often the descendants several generations down from the original immigrant, who primarily live throughout the U.S. They are interested in learning about their ancestral areas, talking with others who know about those areas, and researching their ancestral lines often using the Lag Genealogists.

Bygdelags always sponsor a yearly Stevne in various towns in the upper Midwest, where friends and family meet to participate in Norwegian cultural and research classes and other activities. The Genealogy Lab is always open during Stevne time. See the Fellesraad website for specific information on the Bygdelags and their Stevner: [www.fellesraad.com](http://www.fellesraad.com) and then click on Lag Information Sheets.

Genealogy is a very large part of Bygdelag activities. Lags have genealogical collections of sources relevant to their localities in Norway. They are often very knowledgeable in their localities in the U.S. Because the Bygdelag and Norsk Slektshistorisk Forening have the same interest and drive to find family members and ancestors, I see a great

potential in this partnering. With the Norwegian-American Forum established, research questions can be cooperatively resolved. Lookups can be done by members on both sides of the ocean. Online sources, documents, and links can be shared. We can exchange not only Lag newsletters, but we can also share or donate Norwegian-American family histories and publications for the NSF Library.

With the exchange of Lag Genealogists and NSF memberships, the potential for success can be experienced in both organizations. The influence of both organizations will be felt throughout the Norwegian and Norwegian-American genealogical and historical communities. Partnering builds visibility of both of our organizations in Norway and Norwegian-America.

Together we can help each other find needed information. And, of course, we (Bygdelag) invite you to attend our Bygdelag Stevner, where you will be received like royalty!

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<sup>i</sup> Odd Sverre Lovell, *A Folk Epic: The Bygdelag in America* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1975), 14.