

August 15, 1988

To all secretaries of culture and
Bygdebok committees in Norge.

Dear friends:

Since we sent out the attached letter in September 1980, regarding bygdebøker at the University of North Dakota, we've received an impressive collection of 529 (1987) volumes. The majority of these volumes were gifts from the Norwegian municipalities, and we would again like to say thank you for them.

As Sandra Beidler mentions in the attached letter in English, the state of North Dakota will celebrate its centennial next year. In conjunction with this, we'd like to make our bygdebok collection as complete as possible—maybe the biggest in America! We're attaching a guide (*Guide to Norwegian Bygdebøker*) covering the books we had received up to August 1987. *We would greatly appreciate if you would look through the catalog and help us to acquire those books that we don't have.* We know that many new books have come out in the last few years, and perhaps you could help us get track down older books that are no longer for sale. As Sandra mentions, we would of course appreciate receiving the books as gifts, but if that isn't possible, we'd like to find out what they cost and where we can get them.

We need a full-time person—preferably a native Norwegian—who can help Norwegian-Americans navigate the rich bygdebok literature and who can work with Norwegian centers for emigration (emigrant archives, emigrant lists, etc.). This person would need to have good knowledge of English, the two Norwegian language forms, Norwegian geography, family history, etc. If you know anyone who might be interested in this, they should write to Sandra Beidler at the University of North Dakota. We have not secured funding for this yet, but there is a good chance that we can do so.

I have withdrawn from language instruction at the University, but I have promised to continue my work with the bygdebok collection and immigrant center. I'm now working on an almost full-time basis for Brekke Tours/Scandinavia. We specialize in cultural group tours to and from Scandinavia.

We know from experience that the best way to promote contact with America—and therefore sales of bygdebøker—is to organize festivals in the individual municipalities and invite Norwegian-Americans "home." This summer, Vik, in Sogn will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first emigration from Sogn to America. In conjunction with this, Brekke Tours has set up a charter plane from Minneapolis to Bergen July 19! Lesja municipality is doing something similar. Other municipalities are sending large groups to America to promote contact with the old home-places. Luster in Sogn, and Bardu and Målselv in Troms are three I can name that are doing this.

For the summer of 1989 we've planned departures of charters from Minneapolis every Tuesday, with returns to Minneapolis on Wednesdays. We can also send planes to Stavanger, Bergen,

Trondheim or Bodø on Monday/Tuesday or Wednesday/Thursday—should there be any interest. These planes belong to Ports of Call in Denver, Colorado and have 185 seats. Please send us a telefax if your municipality would be interested in cultural exchanges (group tours) to or from America. We can also arrange group tours within America.

If you are able to send bygdebøker to our collection at the University of North Dakota, they can be sent to:

Erling Skogvold, EskoNor A/S
Storgt. 35
2000 Lillestrøm

Erling will send the books on to North Dakota at no charge via our charter planes.

Correspondence regarding bygdebøker or the position at the University can be sent in English or Norwegian to:

Sandra Beidler
Assistant Coordinator
Department of Special Collections
Chester Fritz Library
Grand Forks Library
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202
U.S.A.

We sincerely hope to hear from you.

With heartfelt greetings,
Arne Brekke