

“TO PROVE TO YOU I HAVEN’T FORGOTTEN MY NORWEGIAN”: THE AUDIO LETTERS OF OWEN VEUM

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Abstract

Letters are important historical sources, not only for their textual content, which expresses a vast range of human interactions and thoughts, but also as a social practice. Immigrant letters, broadly defined, include all correspondence related to international migration. This article examines the collection of audio letters recorded by Owen Veum, a second-generation Norwegian in the United States. The audio letters were recorded between 1969 and 2001 and sent to relatives in Norway. In 2015, the letters were donated to the Vestland County Council Archives.

The aim of this article is to discuss similarities between the written letters of Norwegian immigrants to the United States and the Owen Veum tapes. The Owen Veum tapes, though audio rather than written, provide a unique perspective on Norwegian emigration history. They document the life of a second-generation American with Norwegian immigrant parents and offer insights into a Norwegian-speaking community in the state of Wisconsin in the United States. The collection highlights the diversity of historical sources and the adoption of audio recording technology by immigrants.

Keywords: audio letters, migration history, Norway, United States of America

Introduction

In 2025, Norway marks the 200th anniversary of the journey of the ship *Restauration*, which set sail from the city of Stavanger on 5 July 1825, for New York. This was the first organised voyage of Norwegian emigrants to the United States, sparking an important part of Norwegian history. From the first emigrants boarding the ship *Restauration* and the next hundred years onwards, the emigrant movement saw a significant part of the Norwegian population relocating across the Atlantic Ocean. Some 800,000 individuals had emigrated by 1925, making Norway second only to Ireland in total numbers of emigrated population to the United States. The total Norwegian population was just over one million in 1825. The emigration was primarily driven by overpopulation and economic crises, although the reasons for emigration were complex and varied throughout the first hundred years of migration (Østrem, 2014). Most Norwegians settled in the Midwest, in the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, the Dakotas and Iowa. Here, several Norwegian American communities arose and established businesses, churches, newspapers and colleges.

As the bicentennial of this historic migration is being celebrated across Norway and the United States throughout 2025, archival institutions are providing access to various sources on migration, enabling users to reflect on the legacy of Norwegian Americans and their cultural heritage.

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This article presents research on a collection of recorded audio letters Owen Veum sent to his cousin Bjarne Lunde in Norway between 1969 and 2001. By presenting the contents of his archive and the topics of conversation on the recorded tapes, we learn more about Owen Veum, who was born in the United States to Norwegian emigrants from Western Norway. The article sheds light on how the archive of Owen Veum share similarities with other collections of migrant correspondence and explains how the collection is unique in addressing Norwegian identity in the United States, language, and family contact across the Atlantic.

Biography of Owen Veum

Owen Veum was born on 24 May 1917, in Stoughton, Wisconsin. He was the son of Norwegian immigrants Kristoffer Larsson Veum (1879–1972) and Elsa Veum (1882–1964). The Veum farm from which his father originated is located not far from the town Hafslo in the Sogn region of Western Norway. Kristoffer L. Veum immigrated to the United States in 1899, where he Americanised his name to Chris, a common practice for many Norwegian immigrants (National Archives at Chicago, 1906). Owen Veum's mother Elsa was born Elsa Olsdotter Lunde. She was born in Jostedal, some 30 kilometres north of Hafslo. She emigrated to the United States in 1901 (Vinda, 2007).

There are limited sources that document Chris and Elsa's life in Norway. As was common for emigrated Norwegians, Chris Veum went back to Norway to visit his family at least twice, in 1904 and 1908. Reflecting a protocol for emigrants in the city of Bergen, Chris Veum registered as a factory worker in August 1908 (National Archives of Norway, 1908). Chris and Elsa Veum got married in 1906, and settled down as farmers in Stoughton, Dane County, Wisconsin in 1919. Owen was their only child.

Chris Veum was not the only one in the Veum family to emigrate to the United States. Of his five brothers, three of them emigrated in the 1890s, all of whom settled in Dane County. Here, they had 19 children among them (Vinda, 2007). Dane County has a long history of Norwegian immigrants, and the city of Stoughton is known for its rich Norwegian heritage. The first Norwegians purchased land in Dane County as early as May 1840. Soon after, a Norwegian Lutheran congregation was established. Records show that over three thousand Norwegians had settled in Dane County by 1850, several of whom had immigrated from the Sogn district (Hedberg, 1994).

As mentioned, Owen Veum's father and mother were born in the Hafslo area. It is not known precisely how many immigrants to the United States originated from this part of the country. However, research on so-called priest's certificates, certificates of conduct issued by local priests, has shown that approximately 2,300 individuals from the Hafslo area received such a certificate before emigrating to the United States in the years 1845–1917. However, the numbers might be significantly larger, as other records show numbers that exceeds this, especially after the end of the American Civil War (Hess and Høyum, 2013). Many of these emigrants settled in Wisconsin, and later in other parts of the upper Midwest.

Owen Veum ran the family farm in Stoughton, raising cattle and growing tobacco. Reportedly proud of his Norwegian heritage, he spoke Norwegian with a distinct Sogn dialect, influenced by his parents' mother tongue. In many cases Owen Veum uses American words in his audio letters but inflects them according to his Norwegian Sogn dialect. In 1944, Owen Veum married Eunice Schachtschneider (1919–2011). They had seven children. Owen Veum passed on 30 July 2015. Their son Kenny Veum still lives on the farm as of 2025.

The Collection

The audio letters collection consists of 31 open reel tapes and three audio cassettes, includes a Panasonic RQ-103S reel to reel tape recorder, and is part of the collections of the Vestland County Council Archives in Norway. The reels are all 3 inches in diameter, 150 feet length, with a polyester base film. Based on the few preserved original packaging materials, the tapes appear to be Scotch 175 magnetic tape, though some reels by other manufacturers might appear in the collection.

Owen Veum recorded and sent the tapes to his cousin Bjarne Lunde in MarifjØra, a town close to the Veum farm in Norway. Unfortunately, accurately dating the tapes proves difficult. While some envelopes and postal cases were preserved (Figure 1), other tapes lack packaging. In some envelopes several tapes are included, but it is not known whether these tapes were recorded on dates close to another or not, or even if they were originally sent together. In those cases where postage stamps are preserved and possible to decipher, postmarks indicate that most of the tapes seem to have been recorded in the 1970s.

The preserved envelopes fall into two categories. Most of them are small cases made of either plastic or cardboard (Figure 1), specifically designed for mailing audio tapes. In addition, a few envelopes reinforced with bubble wrap are preserved. The envelopes and cases themselves provide no indication as to the dating of the individual tapes.

Bjarne Lunde also sent tapes from Norway to Stoughton, but these tapes were not preserved. Owen Veum's son Kenny remembered his father recording tapes and playing those he received for others in the Stoughton area, but wrote in an e-mail to the author that his father would tape over the tapes he received once he had listened and shared them (Veum, 2024).

It is evident from the tapes preserved in the Vestland County Council Archives that recording audio letters was a fulfilling activity for Owen Veum. He often states his motivation as "I'll send you a tape to prove to you I haven't forgotten my Norwegian", or simply "It is time to record a new tape, so that you may hear from us".² If his tape is a reply to a recently received tape from his cousin, Owen Veum sincerely thanks him, and expresses regrets at not sending his reply sooner. However, on several occasions Owen Veum requests more contact and tapes from his Norwegian relatives. It seems that Bjarne Lunde at one point rarely sent any correspondence at all: "It seems to me that you guys are afraid of us", Owen Veum commented on several tapes.

2 All quotations from Owen Veum that appear in this article were translated to English for this article.

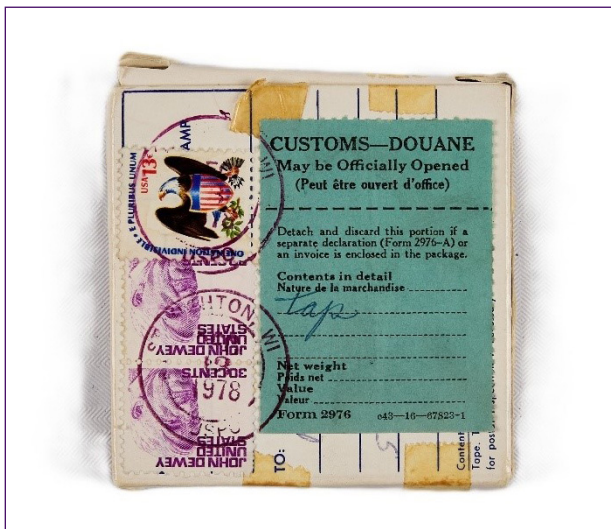


Figure 1. Package dated 1978 containing one of the Owen Veum tapes. Photo: Javad Montazeri/Vestland County Council Archives.

All the open reel tapes are recorded at $3\frac{3}{4}$ ips, which results in 8 minutes of recording time. This is the default speed setting of the Panasonic RQ-103S. However, $1\frac{1}{8}$ ips is also possible by removing the capstan sleeve from the capstan. Owen Veum did not make this adjustment. All of Owen Veum’s tapes are recorded to their maximum capacity of 8 minutes. On several tapes, the reels are full before Owen Veum finishes his sentence, resulting in abrupt endings. Owen Veum himself comments that he talks a lot. For example, on a tape dated March 29, 1976, Owen Veum reports his wife Eunice saying that if he ever went to Norway, “it would result in me doing all the talking, and the people over there get to say nothing”. Several such small humorous comments or stories surface throughout the recorded tapes. In addition to talking, or rather in order not to leave any tape unused, it was also common for Owen Veum to record music onto the tapes if there was nothing more to add about recent events. The musical genre is usually American country, but there is no mention of whether the music is recorded from other tapes, from a disc or the radio, or if the recorded music bears any significance to Owen Veum himself, or to Bjarne Lunde.

Methodology

The tapes were donated by the Lunde family to the Vestland County Council Archives in late 2015, but no further preservation or digitisation actions were taken at the time. In 2022, attention was brought to the collection, and a plan for digitisation of the materials was initiated. During assessment of the contents in preparation for the digitisation process, some cases of oxide layer delamination were observed, which led to a temporary halt in the digitisation process while the condition of the material was further assessed. It was found that the extent of oxide layer delamination was less severe than initially assumed, and the digitisation work resumed after a two-year delay.³ No additional preservation measures were implemented. The tapes exhibiting signs of oxide layer delamination were handled with care but otherwise digitised using the same pro-

3 Another reason for this delay was that other material was prioritised for digitisation during the same period the Veum tapes were further assessed.

cedure as the rest of the collection. The digitisation of the collection was completed in 2024. For research purposes, the digital preservation files were used to listen to the content of the tapes.

An inventory of the tapes was produced during the digitisation process, containing a summary, sometimes keyword-based, of the contents of each tape. The work on digitisation and the production of the inventory was carried out by the author of this article. The inventory also contains a field dedicated to overall comments, including information about the possible recording date. The keywords used were purely based on the topics of conversation and were not further categorised nor did they follow a pre-defined set of keywords. Later in this article, Alsvik’s (1994) analysis of topics common in letters from the Haugesund area in Norway is presented. The inventory of the Owen Veum tapes was used to compare these two sets of correspondence.

An excerpt of the inventory follows (Table 1). As with quotations, descriptions were originally written in Norwegian and have been translated to English for this article.

Tape number	Contents	Comments
OV-013A	Olina and the sister Elene speaks. On family and their health. Olina was recently on a group trip to Chicago. Christmas cooking. Asks for a reply on Christmas mail and an invitation to visit the U.S. Traveling to Norway has become expensive. Recollections of a trip to Oslo. Owen has 12 cows. Has stopped eating meat and spicy food and drinking coffee.	Postal stamp 14.04.1975, but talks about Christmas?
OV-013B	Ola speaks. Christmas greetings. On the weather, a lot of snow. Petrol prices up. Layoffs. Nothing else to add. Olin does not want to speak on tape. Prices up on sugar, prices on livestock almost halved, pigs however not changed. Bad crop yield. Layoffs, strike in the auto industry. Taxes up. Ola has turned 97, his neighbour on the retirement home is 96 (he is also Norwegian). Those who have passed lately. Tobacco crops are OK. The children home for Thanksgiving, 19 in total. Cooking <i>flatbrød</i> ⁴ , some talk about <i>lutefisk</i> ⁵ .	Postal stamp 14.04.1975, but talks about Christmas?

Table 1. Excerpt of the inventory describing the Owen Veum tapes.

Comments were added to the inventory listing to note issues regarding the handling and analysis of the Owen Veum tapes. The excerpt in Table 1 describes a single tape that was recorded on both sides, hence the letters A and B in the tape numbering. The tape

4 *Flatbrød*, literally “flat bread”, is a traditional Norwegian thin, dry bread. Today it is mostly eaten alongside soups and stews.
5 *Lutefisk* is a seafood dish made of cured and dried cod that is later rehydrated prior to eating. The dish is commonly eaten at Christmas in several of the Nordic countries.

was found in an envelope with a postage stamp dated 14 April 1975, but was most likely recorded in early December, as there is talk about a recent Thanksgiving celebration alongside talk of Christmas preparations. This indicates that relying entirely on information given on the preserved envelopes is insufficient to date the tapes. It is evident throughout the tapes that Owen Veum was eager to send his tapes without delay after he had finished recording them, as he often refers to previously recorded tapes and the frequency of tapes sent from Norway. Regarding the discrepancy between the postage stamps and the contents of the tape, it is most likely that the Lunde family did not always place recordings back into the same envelopes that they were received in.

As a result of difficulties in dating the tapes, the tape numbering in the inventory is not chronologically ordered. More emphasis is placed on the summaries of the contents in the catalogue, as this proves to be the most valuable indicator of the contents, rather than their assumed date.

There are only a few instances in which Owen Veum specifies the date of the recording, and typically this is limited to mentioning the day of the month, without indicating either the month or the year. In most cases, the tapes were further dated based on the information given by the individual speaking on the tape. For example, election results are sometimes referred to, making it possible to assume a year of recording based on the name of the current governor in Wisconsin. The same is possible based on references given to preparations for holiday celebrations, or the time of year in relation to the seasons of farming.

The inventory example also provides names of individuals other than Owen Veum speaking (or refusing to speak) on the tapes. This is valuable information and provides insights into the lives of other Norwegian Americans in Owen Veum's community at the time and is further discussed later in this paper. Ages of Owen Veum's relations were also occasionally mentioned on the tapes, and this information can also be used to infer the recording date.

The digitisation of the Owen Veum tapes, initially delayed due to preservation issues, has provided a valuable resource for research into Norwegian American communities. The inventory created during the digitisation process, despite its lack of a predefined keyword set, has proven instrumental in comparing correspondence topics with those identified by Alsвик (1994). In addition, the difficulty regarding dating of the tapes underscores the importance of contextual information in accurately dating historical recordings.

The Immigrant Letter as Historical Source

The correspondence of famous writers, politicians, and other notable figures has long been considered an important historical source. In the study of letter writing, much attention has been given to the contents of the letters, expressing the vast range of human interaction and thoughts in writing. Barton and Hall explain that letters may be considered not only as carriers of text, but as indicators of social practice as well: "through letters one can narrate experiences, dispute points, describe situations, offer explanations, give instructions and so on" (Barton and Hall, 2000, p. 1). Thus, immigrant letters contain not only discussions of historical events, but also contain important clues about the identity, beliefs and intentions of the author.

Migrant correspondence is not limited to letters written on paper. Throughout history, migrants have adopted emerging communication technologies to maintain contact with

relatives in their countries of origin. There is no doubt that the development of new modes of communication significantly influenced historical migration, just as it continues to shape contemporary migratory patterns (Oiarzabal and Reips, 2012). As audio recording equipment became more affordable and accessible to ordinary consumers after the Second World War, this technology enabled transnational communication in new ways. The art of letter writing requires individuals either to possess the necessary literacy skills to compose letters themselves or to rely on someone else to write on their behalf (Cancian and Wegge, 2016). The possibility of recording a tape or cassette, as well as communicating on the telephone, made oral communication over far distances possible. This oral mode removes certain issues of literacy, namely, the ability to write proficiently or to read and write in another language.

When discussing letters from immigrants to the United States, Sinke (2016) proposes a definition of the term “immigrant letters”: “Broadly conceived the category could include all correspondence back and forth, to and from a person involved in international migration to the United States at some point in his or her life” (Sinke, 2016, p. 417). By defining the term broadly and describing the letters as “family papers” rather than immigrant letters, both correspondence sent from the emigrant and letters from the people in the homeland may be included.

Owen Veum and his cousin Bjarne Lunde exchanged audio letters. According to Sinke’s definition, this correspondence would constitute a collection of “family papers.” It is often the case that only one side of a correspondence between two family members has been preserved. This is also true of the archive of Owen Veum: the recordings made by Bjarne Lunde have been lost. In this instance, the absence of Bjarne Lunde’s contributions is because Owen Veum utilised the same tape multiple times. It is not unlikely that there was an economic reason behind this. Nevertheless, the tapes recorded by Bjarne Lunde would have constituted a valuable supplement to the recordings of his American-born cousin.

In a Norwegian context, letters from emigrated individuals to the United States are referred to as *Amerikabrev* (America letters). The *Amerikabrev* served not only as a means of contact with the relatives in the homeland, but also likely played a significant role in motivating others to emigrate. Letters received from overseas held news value for the local community, and were often shared around town, some of them even printed in local newspapers; and are consequently believed to be a crucial part of the recruitment of new emigrants (Østrem, 2014). A sense of adventure and hope for a better future could be fostered by the image of Norwegian Americans depicted in these letters. Though negative voices appear less frequently in collections of preserved letters, there are also examples of preserved correspondence testifying to the harsh realities of emigration (Østrem, 2014).

By enclosing photographs with their letters, the senders and recipients had the possibility of sharing their lives through another type of media. Photographs served as visual reminders of the home country and established a link between the immigrant and the origin community (Reiakvam, 1997). For example, the Norwegian photographer Olai Fauske (1887–1944) received several requests from emigrants to photograph known landscapes and people for their own pleasure and reminiscence. The request was at times very specific on how a portrait was to be composed and at what time of year it was to be taken. The demand for photographs from Norway proved to be a business venture, as Fauske advertised in newspapers for people wanting to send their portrait or a picture of their home farm to emigrated relatives in the United States (Reiakvam, 1997).

Letters sent from Norway to the United States are sometimes referred to as *Noregsbrev* (Norway letters). Archival institutions in Norway hold several collections of *Amerikabrev*; however, the number of *Noregsbrev* collections is smaller compared to those of *Amerikabrev*. Some efforts have been made to collect *Noregsbrev*, and the National Library of Norway has published their collection of over 3,000 letters sent to Norwegian emigrants to the United States and Canada, as well as other parts of the world.⁶

Aside from praising life in the new country or encouraging relatives to also emigrate, immigrant letters also contain information about everyday life. This information may be interesting or relevant, such as the wellbeing of relatives, new additions to the family or other significant events in the lives of the senders, although many of the topics covered might be classified as "more or less relevant events from the lives in emigration and at home" (Kalc, 2015, p. 201). This too, is the case in the Owen Veum tapes. It is important to emphasize that Owen Veum himself was not an immigrant to the United States, and as such, his audio letters are not letters from a person personally "involved in international migration". There are still several similarities between the Owen Veum tapes and immigrant letters, and the recordings benefit from being studied in relation to immigrant letters. Comparing an analysis of a collection of *Noregsbrev* from the Haugesund area in Norway in the years 1879–1899 with other collections of family papers, Alsвик (1994) concludes that most of these letters follow a similar structure. The letters in question for the most part also follow this pattern:

- "Thank you for your letter"
- On the weather
- On the crops
- On the fisheries
- On the businesses in town
- Current topics in the public sector
- On spiritual/religious life
- On relatives and acquaintances
- Greetings

The Owen Veum tapes largely follow this pattern as well. For example, the contents of a tape probably recorded on April 12, 1975, are as follows:

- Greetings: "I thought I wanted to send you some words".
- On the weather: "We had a great deal of snow in March".
- On the health, death and funerals of relatives and acquaintances: "He had relatives in Lambhaug⁷, so if you see any of them, tell them, please".
- On the livestock: "I'm planning on slaughtering five pigs in a couple of weeks. I'll keep one of them and give the other ones to the children. But I want to keep the trotters. I say to my wife, I'm so fond of 'syltelabbar'⁸, you know".
- On prices on goods and current topics, mostly the war in Vietnam: "The people in Congress know that people are fed up with this, so it's a good thing the war comes to an end".
- Greetings: "This will be all this time. But it won't be long until I record a new tape (...) please try to send something so we can hear from you too".

6 The collection, along with collections of *Amerikabrev*, is accessible through the National Library's search engine here: <https://www.nb.no/search?mediatype=brev-og-manuskripter> (Accessed 21 May 2025).

7 Lambhaug farm is close to the Veum farm in Norway.

8 Syltelabbar is a traditional Norwegian Christmas dish of boiled cured pig's trotters.

The weather, the crops and livestock, as well as the health of relatives and acquaintances are the most prominent topics discussed, while fisheries and religion are never mentioned. This shows how the Owen Veum tapes bear similarities to what might be perceived as *Amerikabrev* in a traditional sense, even though the tapes are recorded later than most collections of such letters and despite the fact that Owen Veum himself was born in the United States.

Analysing the Contents of the Veum Tapes

The linguistic dimension of Owen Veum's audio tapes constitute a central aspect of the collection. Listeners proficient in Norwegian will immediately recognise that Owen Veum, as well as other relatives and acquaintances featured on the tapes, speaks in a dialect from the Sogn region. Owen Veum was not proficient in writing Norwegian, and it is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that one of the reasons for him to choose tape recordings as a form of communication was linguistically motivated. Earlier in this article, sources have been presented that highlight the emigration from the Sogn district to Dane County. The audio tapes of Owen Veum illustrate how a distinctive dialect from Western Norway continued to be maintained among second-generation immigrants in the United States. The persistence of such a dialect across generations of immigrants demonstrates how chain migration influences the dialects spoken by immigrant communities (Lykke, 2020).

The linguistic dimension of migrant audio letters is also addressed by Kalc (2015), presenting audio letters by emigrants from the multicultural Trieste, Italy (Trst in Slovenian) to Australia. Taking place on a different continent, the choice of language spoken by the protagonists on the tapes forms an interesting part of the analysis and thus highlights language choices as significant elements of migrant audio letters. The tapes presented by Kalc originated from a family with Slovenian and Croatian as their mother tongues, yet all communication on the tapes is in Italian. This contrasts with other emigrant correspondence from Slovenian-speaking emigrants to Australia. Kalc asserts that "this points out the complex matter of the identity of Triestine immigrants" and that it was an "adjustment strategy to avoid dividing ethnic and ideological sentiments, which had dramatically affected the history of Trieste and led thousands of inhabitants there to emigrate to Australia in the mid-1950s" (Kalc, 2015, p. 218).

Through his manner of expression on the audio tapes, it is evident that Owen Veum maintained a Norwegian identity. This suggests that his sense of cultural belonging was not significantly challenged by his upbringing in the English-speaking United States. In Kalc's (2015) study, Triestine emigrants navigated complex identity landscapes through language choices. In the censuses of 1920, 1930, and 1940, several residents in the vicinity of Owen Veum's home reported having Norway as their place of birth and Norwegian as their mother tongue (National Archives at Chicago 1920; 1930; 1940). This was also the case for Owen Veum's parents, who reported this in the census. He thus grew up in a typical Norwegian American environment. Owen Veum's use of his Sogn dialect may be interpreted as cultural continuity, reflecting a context in which linguistic heritage is preserved rather than negotiated.

At the same time, the correspondence with Bjarne Lunde emerged as both a linguistic and cultural lifeline, particularly as the older generation around him gradually passed away, a sentiment Owen Veum expresses on several occasions. This mirrors the emotional and identity-affirming function of migrant audio letters more broadly, where language becomes both a medium of connection and a marker of belonging.

Owen Veum at times invited some of his cousins to speak on tape, although some of them refused to do so. Of those who agreed to speak, most of them spoke Norwegian, indicating that several of the second-generation members of the Veum family had learned the Norwegian language from their parents. Owen Veum also invited individuals of his father's generation, those were themselves immigrants, to speak on the tapes. At the time of recording, these individuals were close to 90 years of age. By doing so, Owen Veum documented the voices of Norwegians who emigrated from Norway at the turn of the century. These voices are unique sources of history and language.

One of the elderly Norwegians in the community was a man named Karl, a Norwegian-born immigrant in his nineties. Owen Veum visited Karl several times, and Karl also spoke on multiple occasions on tapes from the late 1960s. Karl himself also maintained significant contact with Norway, and the recordings contain accounts that he both visited relatives there and made telephone calls with them. The encounters with Karl demonstrate how the local Norwegian American community changed during Owen Veum's lifetime. One of the most significant changes often touched upon by Owen Veum, is that "there are few left who speak Norwegian", which he says on several tapes. Over time, we hear about Karl's declining health, and on a tape dated 5 April of an unknown year, Owen Veum reports that Karl has passed away the previous night. On a tape recorded eight days later, details of the funeral were shared. According to Owen Veum, approximately 340 people attended the wake, and many were present at the funeral. Owen mentions the languages used during the service. As there were few people left who spoke Norwegian, the funeral service was held in English. However, one Norwegian hymn was sung: "Den store hvite flokk, å se". The hymn was first published in 1765 and is based on a folk tune from Heddal in central Norway. It is still used in Norwegian churches today (Kyrkjerådet, 2013). It is evident that the decline in the number of Norwegian speakers in the area was something Owen Veum found regrettable. There are few perspectives on the Norwegian community in Stoughton beyond the individuals Owen Veum speaks about or with. Consequently, it is challenging to engage in further speculation or discussion on his views regarding the Norwegian community in the area.

Conclusion

Owen Veum was a second-generation Norwegian in the United States, which must be considered in context when studying the audio letters he sent back to Norway. In this way, the archive of Owen Veum differs from other collections of Amerikabrev or migrant correspondence, in that he did not send letters back home per se. Instead, he sent audio tapes to a home he had never resided in, but which evidently held great significance to him. Important topics addressed on the tapes include family and acquaintances, and particularly the health of the older generation. There is also much discussion about the prices of goods, the harvests on the farm, and international news, such as the Vietnam War and unrest in the Middle East. Finally, there is an abundance of "more or less relevant events from the lives in emigration and at home," as Kalc (2015) found in his study; regarding the weather, that the car had been in for repairs, or that fact that Owen Veum stopped drinking coffee for his health. In this way, the audio letters of Owen Veum draw similarities to migrant correspondence from first-generation immigrants to the United States.

By inviting relatives and other individuals with Norwegian ancestry to speak on the tapes, the anticipated audience of the tapes is not only Owen Veum's cousin Bjarne Lunde but also includes other friends and relatives of people who had left the Hafslo area. This is another similarity between Amerikabrev and the Owen Veum tapes.

By studying the Owen Veum tapes, a source of Norwegian emigration that is rarely presented in the context of Norwegian migrant history may be explored: Owen Veum's recordings document the life of a second-generation American with Norwegian immigrant parents, providing insight into a local community with several Norwegian-speaking residents. Additionally, individuals are encountered who themselves emigrated from Norway at the turn of the 20th century. They tell their own stories and send greetings home, and listeners later hear second-hand accounts of their declining health and death. Thus, Owen Veum's tapes are a unique source about the generation of Norwegians who emigrated to the United States in the late 1800s.

Veum's use of audio tapes demonstrates that diverse types of historical source material complement each other. As audio recording technology became available to ordinary people, immigrants also began using it in their correspondence with relatives. Owen Veum's recordings provide a unique insight into a Norwegian-speaking community in Wisconsin, where several of the speakers on the tapes learned Norwegian in the United States. By making these sources accessible, archival institutions provide material for a range of scientific fields. It is not only the historical facts presented on the tapes that are worth preserving. Equally important are their formats, their materials, the collection history and the language used. This tapes and their contents contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural and social dynamics of Norwegian Americans during the mid-20th century.

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