



Left: portrait of O.G. Felland; Right: scan of a glass plate negative from the O.G. Felland collection at St. Olaf College's Rolvaag Memorial Library

A LONG-TERM PROJECT TO CONSERVE IMAGES OF CAMPUS LIFE AT ST. OLAF COLLEGE

Often at CCAHA, our work with a client is fairly straightforward—they bring us an object that is damaged, we assess its condition, and one of our conservators treats it. Other times, a project can be multifaceted, requiring the attention of many staff members and unfolding over a period of years.

One such project began in June 2018 at the campus of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, and it is still ongoing. CCAHA's work with St. Olaf's Rolvaag Memorial Library grew out of a Preservation Needs Assessment and subsequent Collections Assessment Survey. A Preservation Needs Assessment is a general evaluation of a collection, including its environment, storage, security, and many other considerations. A Collections Assessment Survey, on the other hand, covers the preservation needs of a specific collection, which may include treatment.

During that summer 2018 site visit, a team of CCAHA and contracted conservators—including CCAHA's Senior Photograph Conservator Barbara Lemmen and Senior Paper Conservator Heather Hendry—viewed selected paper, photographic, textile, and AV material, and advised library staff on next steps. One collection that was identified for further treatment during this item-level assessment was the school's O.G. Felland glass plate negative collection.

O. G. Felland (1853-1938) was a professor at St. Olaf and helped found the college's library. His photographs documented the campus and various activities from 1886-1928, including images of faculty, graduating classes, St. Olaf's world-renowned choir, and his own family and friends. The O.G. Felland glass plate negative collection consists of approximately 1,620

gelatin silver developed-out negatives. The plan for the collection includes thorough cleaning, a variety of conservation treatments to address wear and damage, and high-resolution digitization.

To help prepare the negatives for their trip to CCAHA's lab, two additional weeks of onsite work were conducted in August 2019. St. Olaf's staff assisted by preparing supplies, making storage boxes, and creating an extensive working database of the negatives and their subject matter. During the onsite treatment, CCAHA staff trained St. Olaf workers in basic cleaning technique and provided quality control checks. Some of the condition issues noted during this visit were cracks, flaking emulsion, discoloration, surface grime, and broken supports.

In October 2019, a large shipment from St. Olaf arrived at CCAHA, and lab staff pitched in to help unload dozens of boxes. Over the next few weeks, a variety of consolidation adhesives and mending techniques were tested to determine which would work best. Test scans were made to evaluate the various methods. Among the treatments, Photograph Conservator Zach Long repaired several broken negatives by carefully aligning the fragments, bonding them temporarily with a sticky wax, and then using capillary action to pull a low viscosity adhesive into the break.

Once treatment and digitization is complete, these invaluable documents of campus life will be able to return to the collections at St. Olaf College, and the images will be made accessible in a way they never were before.

For more images of this project, visit ccaah.org/news.