

**TAKE
ONE!**

Published in the interest of
North Americans of Scandinavian descent

Scandinavian Heritage News

December 2015

Happy Holidays!



from
SCANDINAVIAN HERITAGE
ASSOCIATION

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The Elves
of Rovaniemi,
Finland

THE OFFICIAL HOMETOWN
OF SANTA CLAUS®

President's MESSAGE

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!! The SHA Park has had another busy year, especially the summer and fall. Many visitors from all over the world tour the park and are very complimentary and appreciative of what has been accomplished here. The maintenance and upkeep of this park is mainly the responsibility of volunteers. Our main maintenance volunteers are John Sinn (soon 95 years of age), Bob Whetter, and Les Strege. Others who have assisted from time to time are Curt Medalen, George Officer and Craig Elliott. The Christmas lights in the park are set up by Bob Sando and Bob Whetter and Lois Matson assists with the decorating of the outside of the Visitors Center. John Sinn and Les Strege light up the window tree in the Høstfest area. Each year from May 17 (official opening of buildings) through the Høstfest weekend, many volunteer in the buildings from 9 am to 4 pm. The three buildings that have scheduled volunteers are the Gol Stave Church museum, the Sigdal House and the Heritage House Museum—there are too many names to mention, but they are much appreciated. Those who volunteer in the SHA office in the mornings are Marilyn Wagner, Lois Matson, Eva Goodman, Joan Varty, and Marilyn Fiedler. Helene Anderson also volunteers in the office when someone needs to be replaced for a shift. Marion Anderson is the Office Manager and works mostly in the afternoons. The office is open Monday through Friday from 10 am to 4 pm in the winter hours and 9 am to 4 pm for the summer hours. A special thank you to all of our volunteers—this park is very much beholden to them and their willingness to serve.

Scandinavian Heritage Association received a donation in September of \$5,000 from BNSF Railway special excursion fund. SHA applied these funds to the Høstfest-Heritage Foundation. Thank you so very much to BNSF for this generous donation. This gift was presented to SHA President Gail Peterson at a dinner meeting of BNSF.

Christmas will soon be here. Please stop by and shop in the Visitors Center. We have many items which would make good Christmas gifts—books for adults, books for children, Uff-Da items,

Scandinavian calendars, ethnic cups, mugs and tiles, etc. There will be an Open House on December 8, 2015, from 3 to 6 pm in the Visitors Center. This is sponsored by Visit Minot, Norsk Høstfest and Scandinavian Heritage Association. Christmas goodies, coffee and cider will be served. The purchase of Scandinavian items here is another way of SHA funding the activities of the park.



Gail Peterson

At Høstfest this year, we had an expanded "Elsa's Bookstore". It was designed and set up by Daryce VanHoff and Richard Goodman. It was very well done and the sales again were excellent. We do have a good selection of the books here in our gift shop now so stop by and browse and buy!! Do you know what Xenophobia is? We have xenophobe guides for Danes, Finns, Norwegians and Swedes. It is a phobia about foreigners, probably justified, always understandable. These books explore the national characteristics of Scandinavians with humor and style and they are priced at only \$7.95. The board books, shape books, etc. are always very popular with children. Any other questions on books can be answered by Eva Goodman—she works diligently at the Høstfest bookstore and knows where all of the books are here at the gift shop and in storage—thanks Eva for your dedication. People need to read more books—better than always punching keys and buttons all the time!!

The Annual Meeting of SHA will be on Saturday, January 30, 2016, at 10 am in the lower level of the Visitors Center. All members of SHA are invited to attend. Coffee and rolls will be served. Anyone needing to report on an activity or building should have those reports ready by the annual meeting.

Another item to add to your upcoming calendar—the Annual Banquet will be on April 2, 2016, at the Grand Hotel. That is earlier than it has been in past years and we will be working on that fund raiser in the very near future.

The SHA office will be closed from December 21, 2015 through January 1, 2016—open again effective January 4, 2016. Have a great holiday season.

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2015 OFFICERS

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Three-year terms ending January 2017

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Three-year terms ending January 2016

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Buffy now at home in the Scandinavian Heritage Visitors Center

O give me a home where the buffalo (bison) roam— Have you met Buffy the Bison yet? He is the newest resident of the Visitors Center and just lays down by the big window and watches the world go by. Buffy has been donated by Mark Hamilton to *Visit Minot* for their use and is a big hit with old and young alike—especially the young.

Note: The American bison lives only in North America, while the two main buffalo species reside in Africa and Asia. A small population of bison relatives called the European bison (Bison bonasus) lives in isolated parts of Poland.

And remember, it is the NDSU Bison (not buffalo).



C A L E N D A R

Cancelled:

December 5, 2 pm
Swedish Heritage Society,
Sons of Norway room.

December 6, 2 pm
Christmas on the Prairie,
Thor Lodge Sons of
Norway room.

December 12, noon
Dakota Finnish Society
(Pikkujoulu) Little Christmas party,
Sons of Norway room.

December 14, noon
Souris Valley Danish Society,
meets at Homesteaders.

December 21, 6:30 pm
Sons of Norway Julefest,
The Grand Hotel.

John Sinn, our faithful and hardworking volunteer at the Park (and many other events) will celebrate his 95th birthday on January 20, 2016. Let's all participate in a birthday card shower for John.

Address is:
1712 – 6th St SE, Minot, ND 58701

January 30, 2016, 10 am
Scandinavian Heritage Association
Annual Meeting,
Sons of Norway room.

April 2, 2016, 6 pm
Scandinavian Heritage
Annual Banquet,
Grand Hotel.

*Next newsletter deadline:
Copy and pictures, February 15;
printing, March 1, 2016*

Winter
2015-2016



The Swedish Lutheran Stone Church is one of those rare and monumental treasures that grace the rolling North Dakota prairie located between the Turtle Mountains and the Souris River in Bottineau County. This breathtakingly beautiful country church sits on a promontory just one-half mile south of the Canadian border. As more than one person has told a visitor, take the first gravel road south of the border station located on Highway 14, drive west until you see the steeple off to your left and head towards it. However, according to the National Register of Historic Places, the address is 1903 4th Ave. NE between 108th NE and 109th NE, which is 8 miles northeast of Souris.

The Swedish Zion Lutheran Church was established in 1896 by Swedish immigrants who had migrated from Sweden for free land with the Homestead Act. Six years following the establishment, they decided to build a church made of stones from the surrounding area. In 1903, immigrant men from Norway and Sweden began the work of building their church with the removal of stones from the neighboring lands and hauling them to the location. The stones were a free building material, the other supplies (windows, doors, lumber) came from personal donations of the congregation.

The Swedish Zion Lutheran Stone Church

by Judy Benson Ziegler



According to Gene Wunderlich's book, "Stone Church: A Prairie Parable" this building process was back-breaking work for the congregation, the oldest person working being age 66 and the youngest age 9. Wunderlich also states that two brothers, learning the stone mason trade from their father, Thor and

Gunder Landsverk, were ages 18 and 14, respectively in 1903 when the work began. The average age of those building the church was age 32. One of the members of the congregation, Peter Backman "wanted stone for the church because past experience convinced him that granite would outlast other building material." Both the sanctuary and cemetery of Swedish Zion have relied on granite to reflect the builders' faith, patience and endurance.

Gene Wunderlich's continues to say "Like two great warring tribes, the migrant Swedes and the migrant Granite Boulders did battle on the Plains of Souris, struggled to a standstill, then together created a monument to the strengths of man and nature: an epistle in stone, carved in granite." He researched the members of this Swedish Congregation, the folks who built the church and its architecture. Both he and the Historical Register have favorably compared the church to some classic churches of Europe and America and is celebrated as a structural achievement.



Church interior

His book is certainly worth reading for detail of the Swedish immigrants that settled here, drawn together by culture and language, and the church's construction as a foundation for their new found community. He has intimately tied together the immigrant's shared history and the North Dakota land where they chose to build their Stone Church.

The church was never wired for electricity. Ten windows allowed ample light into the interior during the daytime and kerosene lanterns were used in the evenings; a wood stove provided heat. The Stone Church received a grant from Preservation North Dakota for repairs to the roof, steeple, exterior walls and foundation. It was placed on the National Registry of Historical Places in 2013. The church serves as a symbol of Swedish pioneer settlement recognized by the Swedish Heritage Society of NW North Dakota with its design and structure as late Gothic Revival that is perfected in a country church.

The last service for the Swedish Stone Church was held in 1938. The Bottineau Courant Newspaper writes, "a mere 41 years from 1897 to 1938 but during the

church's time on the prairie foothills of the Turtle Mountains it brought the Swedish immigrants together for worship and community time in a gracious and beautiful landmark that still stands tall and shines bright through those rolling hills in the country that definitely is a true testimony to God." Wunderlich says, "the stones of the Swedish Zion Lutheran Church rise easily from the prairie that had given them birth. The church stands firmly and naturally in its rugged environment. It came about, not from priestly urging, but the desire of a community of settlers to build their own house of worship, a tribute to the Great Winds of Dakota."

The Stone Church is well kept and is open to visitors who frequently stop to admire this beautiful structure and to meditate for a short time within the cool simple interior. It is maintained by the local community and sometimes used by this same community for weddings, funerals, baptisms, and reunions.

Information for this article came from



Church altar

the following sources: "Stone Church: A Prairie Parable" by Gene Wunderlich available at the Swedish Stone Church and the Scandinavian Gift Shop, Minot; "Prairie Churches" by Lauren Hardmeyer Donovan; National Register of Historic Places; and the Bottineau Courant newspaper that ran a series of articles in 2013 for the 110th Anniversary of the Swedish Zion Lutheran Stone Church. •



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OH! RØMMEGRØT! Pure Scandimonium!

by Robert Sando

Every year at Norsk Høstfest attendees are provided an opportunity by First Lutheran Church to enjoy a Norwegian delicacy....Rømmegrøt! This delicious dessert/pudding/porridge is sold by church volunteers at a booth in Stockholm Hall.

RØMMEGRØT

(Single Batch)

3 Quarts Heavy Cream

3 Cups Flour

3 Tablespoons Sugar

1 Tablespoon Salt

2½ Quarts Scalded Whole Milk

Bring cream to a boil stirring constantly. Boil 3-5 minutes.

Slowly mix in flour, salt, and sugar, stirring constantly so it does not get lumpy and butter begins to appear.

Add hot (scalded) milk until correct consistency.

Strain through strainer.



You will know if you're stirring it vigorously enough if the mixture starts turning to butter (Note picture). At that point, remove it from the stove top adding the

scalded milk while continuing to stir. While still hot pour through a strainer. That's a batch! A batch will yield approximately 1½ gallons or 6 quarts or 12 pints of ready-to-eat Rømmegrøt. Don't forget to add melted butter to the top of your serving with sugar and cinnamon.

This much-appreciated and sought-after treat is a very labor-intense undertaking by church members and supporters. Sixty volunteers are required just to make it. Seventy-five batches were made in the church kitchen just before the start of this recent

festival. That amounts to 57½ 4-gallon-pails or 230 gallons of pure eating pleasure. That was converted to over 450 pints and 4000 servings that were entirely sold out by 5:30 of the last day to the disappointment of a few potential customers looking to take a pint or two home with them.

A few facts that may be of interest...to make those 75 batches required 225 ½ gallons of heavy cream, 200 ½ gallons of whole milk, 150 lbs. of flour, and an undetermined amount of sugar and salt.

The four-day run of Høstfest required 90 volunteers to cover the First Lutheran booth...three work shifts per day or 12 for the festival.

The readers of this and our loyal customers should know, that every effort is made to insure a quality product. Once made, the Rømmegrøt is stored in a refrigerated trailer at 33 degrees with ample space between pails to allow uniform refrigeration. The trailer is checked at least twice daily to make sure of a constant temp. The ND State Health Department checks the booth, the roaster temperatures, the volunteers (rubber gloves, hair covering, aprons, etc.) the cleaning solution for the counter tops, etc. The Rømmegrøt must be at a temperature of 135 or more degrees before it can be served. Along with constant stirring the temperature of the product is checked regularly.

First Lutheran's Rømmegrøt booth has been recognized for its quality product, booth appearance, and service. It has received the Merit Award on numerous occasions (note pictures).

Roxanne Maragos, an eight-year-veteran at the helm of this mammoth undertaking, puts in an enor-



mous amount of time as a volunteer for First Lutheran Church. From ordering all of the supplies and ingredients, working with the 60 volunteers making the Rømmegrøt, working with the 90 volunteers in the booth selling it, putting in 45 plus hours to set up and take-down the booth, decorate, washing the 58 storage pails, to filling the pint containers. She also calls and lines up the 60 rømmegrøt-making workers. One can hardly imagine how much time that would take or how many calls it takes to fill that schedule. UFF DA! UFF DA!

Always in need of volunteers, just call the First Lutheran Church office at 852-4853 if you would like to help! You will learn firsthand how to make Rømmegrøt and have a lot of fun in the process. And, yes, you'll get an admission ticket to Norsk Høstfest for your efforts!

Photos courtesy of Robert Sando



Ready or Not!

by Robert Sando

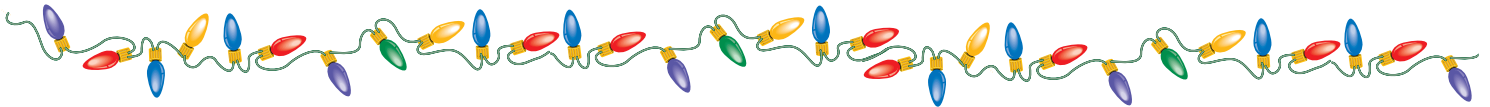
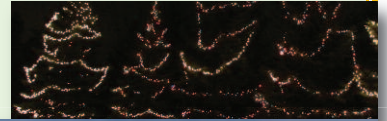
The SHA Park Christmas Lighting Co-Chairs, Bob Sando and Bob Whetter, have announced the completion for another year of the lighting of the Park. That job finished, it's now a

WAIT and SEE game! WAIT for the Christmas Holiday season and SEE the beautifully-lighted evergreens, Nativity display, and other decorations throughout the Park. The lights will be turned on Thanksgiving eve and will be on from approximately 5 p.m. to midnight daily. Most of the lights will continue to be on

display beyond the holiday season until mid-January.

We're ready! We think! Now a blanket of white snow would put the finishing touch on our beautiful Park for the Christmas Holiday season. Enjoy!

Photos by Robert Sando.



GOL STAVE CHURCH - Interesting Facts!

According to our guestbook data this past season our visitor information breaks down as follows:

- 4100+ visitors
- 34 different countries
- 155 Norway visitors

We believe that only half or less of the visitors register and it is usually just adults who do. We think 10,000+ visitors is a more realistic count.



Reprinted from *Scandinavian Press* magazine
Winter 2015-2016 issue.

Christmas traditions of ICELAND

Glæðelig jól...

IN ICELAND, the season starts with **Þorláksmessa—St. Thorlakur's Day**, on December 23rd. St. Thorlakur Thorhallsson, Bishop of Skálholt, is Iceland's major Saint. December 23rd, is the day on which he died. On St. Thorlakur's Day, the main custom is eating a simple meal of skata or skate. The Yule (or Christmas) tree is usually decorated on this day. This is also a big shopping day for last minute gifts, with stores remaining open until midnight.

- **Aðfangadagur—Christmas Eve.** Celebrations start at 6:00 p.m. on Yule Eve. This may have come from old Icelandic tradition, when a new day started at 6:00 p.m., not midnight—and festivities last until the Thirteenth Day (Twelfth Night), which falls on January 6th. Children open their presents after the evening meal on Aðfangadagur. This is when the celebrations really start!

- **Jóladagur - Christmas Day**, is usually celebrated with the extended family. The main meal is 'Hangikjöt', a leg of roast lamb. Sometimes 'Rjúpa' (Rock Ptarmigan a sea bird in the grouse family) is also eaten. Another Yule meal speciality is 'Laufabrauð' or leaf bread, made of thin sheets of dough cut into delicate patterns and fried. Each family often has their own patterns for the Laufabrauð. Yet another Christmas classic is Vínarterta—a delicious layer cake, made with layers of prunes.

- **Annar Jóladagur—Boxing Day**, is another day for visiting friends and family and eating lots more! Public entertainment is considered inappropriate on Yule Eve and Yule Day, and it is on Boxing Day that dancing is again allowed in public!

- **Gamlárskvöld / Nýársdagur—New Year's Eve.** New Year's Day is one of the most important nights of the year in Iceland and there are several magical traditions that are supposed to happen on it! Cows are meant to be able to talk, seals take on human form, the dead rise from their graves, and the Elves move houses. Bonfires have been lit on Gamlárskvöld since the late



Vínarterta,
Iceland's traditional Christmas cake

1700s. People also have big fireworks displays to bring in the New Year. This is called 'sprengja út árið' or 'blowing out the year'.

- **Þrettándinn—Twelfth Night.** January 6th— the last day of Yule, celebrated with bonfires and Elfin dances. Many of the magical traditions associated with New Year's Eve are also supposed to happen at Þrettándinn.

- One other big Yule custom is the coming of the '**Jólasveinarnir' or Yuletide Lads.** These are magical people who come from the mountains in Iceland and each day from December 12th to Yule Eve a different Jólasveinn (Yuletide lad) comes.

There are no native evergreen trees in Iceland, so the first Christmas Trees were Mountain Ash. The first recorded Yule tree was in 1862. People then started to make Yule Trees from a central pole with branches attached to it and it was all painted green.

Nowadays, there are evergreen trees grown on Iceland and people have evergreen Yule trees. It is traditional to have a star or crown on top of the tree. The Icelandic Flag is also commonly used as a decoration.

A very large tree stands outside Reykjavík Cathedral—an annual gift from the people of Oslo, Norway.

You can find recipes for Vínarterta, Laufabrauð, and more in this issue's "Nordic Treats", pages 46 and 47.

Thanks to James Cooper (www.whychristmas.com) for sharing his interesting and timely information.

Høstfest-Heritage Foundation Planned Giving Resource Center

A Great Way to End The Year! Avoiding Errors in Planning Your Estate.

Everyone looks forward to the new year and its promise of new opportunities. Did you know the old year might also yield rewarding returns? As you look ahead, consider some year-end decisions that can make a big difference, not just for the new year, but for many years to come.

There are a number of pitfalls to avoid when planning your estate. Poor planning is one of them and can result from a mere omission in assets or failure to plan. Another pitfall can involve making the wrong decisions about how to transfer your assets to the people and organizations that mean the most to you.

Here are five common mistakes to avoid in estate planning.

- **You Don't Have A Plan** – Many people don't realize they need a plan. As a result they fail to make a will or create a plan during their lifetime. Not having a plan means the distribution of your assets will be dictated by your state's law. State "intestacy" laws typically leaves a percentage of your estate to your family, but you have no say in how your property is divided or who gets what. Make sure you create a plan so that your lifetime intentions are carried out.
- **Using Online DIY for Legal Help** – Because the Internet makes it seem easy to prepare a will or trust online, some people do not feel the need to consult an attorney in their planning. However, these "do it yourself" plans often fail to take into account variations in state law.

Worse, many of these plans would not hold up legally if there were a change in federal tax law. For these reasons, it is important to use an experienced estate planning attorney when creating your future plan.

- **Failure to Properly Designate Beneficiaries** –



Have you designated beneficiaries for all of your assets? If so, have you reviewed your designations recently? Most investment accounts allow for the designation of a beneficiary (IRAs, 401(k)s, and company plans). Because all of these beneficiary designations absolutely control who receives your assets, it's important to periodically review your designations.

- **Failure to Maximize Annual Gifts** – Gifting your property during your life is perhaps the oldest and best way to minimize future estate taxes. Many people fail to realize the prudence of making annual exclusion gifts each year to family members. Over the long run, you can transfer significant sums of money out of your estate and reduce your taxes.
- **Failure to Take Advantage of the Gift Exemptions** – Above and beyond the annual exclusion gift limit, you are permitted to make gifts during your life up to the federal gift exemption amount without owing any gift tax. Making lifetime gifts is a simple and effective way to minimize estate tax. Be sure to act now, and take advantage of the current generous gift exemption before it expires.

The HHF Planned Giving Resource Center (www.hhflegacy.org) is a tremendous place to seek out information on how you can meet personal estate planning goals AND learn more about how you can assure the future of the Scandinavian Heritage Association or charitable non-profits important to you.

The HHF is your resource for being proactive and not leaving your life's work and your legacy to chance. Please take the time to visit our Planned Giving Resource Center online. You can sign up for our e-newsletter, get our 28-page Planning Your Legacy guide and access many other helpful brochures.

The next e-newsletter could be coming to a computer or tablet near you. But only if you stop by www.hhflegacy.org and sign up!

For Us Today, For Them Tomorrow.

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Year-End 2015 Gift Opportunities

The Høstfest-Heritage Foundation (HHF) is pleased to be a part of the Scandinavian Heritage Association's mission. As 2015 draws to a close, we would like to encourage all friends of SHA and HHF to consider us in your year-end gifting. HHF has four great opportunities for you to make a difference and continue or build your heritage legacy.

Scandinavian Heritage Association General Fund. This fund allows for the SHA board working with the HHF to utilize funds for any need or activity supporting the SHA mission. This is a non-endowed fund so all assets can be used. It is also a way for SHA to build a fund for future capital, program or maintenance needs. Please indicate on your gift – SHA General Fund

Scandinavian Heritage Association Endowment Fund. This fund establishes a permanent financial base to provide income and revenue to annually support the programs, projects and activities of the Scandinavian Heritage Association. Again, the SHA board working with the HHF can utilize the "earnings" from this fund for any need or activity supporting the SHA mission. Gifts of \$5,000 or more qualify for the ND Tax Credit for Charitable Giving Law. Please indicate on your gift – SHA General Endowment.

John and Olive Sinn Endowment

for Park Maintenance and Buildings. This fund establishes a permanent financial base to provide income and revenue to support general Scandinavian Park maintenance and grounds keeping. It is named in honor of John and Olive Sinn whose dedication and work in building and maintaining the Park will serve generations of visitors. Gifts of \$5,000 or more qualify for the ND Tax Credit for Charitable Giving Law. Please indicate on your gift – SHA Park Endowment.

Become an Oarsman. The HHF has established an annual fund program to support its overall mission. Gifts of \$1 or more recognize the donor as 'Nordic Friends'. Gifts of \$100 or more might earn the donor the title of chieftain of their very own Viking Drakkar. You can learn more about the Oarsmen Annual Fund on the HHF website. Please look under Giving Opportunities in the Your Legacy section. We are looking to fill our 2016 drakkars with fine rowers working for a common goal. It could be you!

During Norsk Høstfest 2015 HHF hosted the VIP Room, manned an information booth for HHF and SHA and operated the Games of Høstfest booth for our younger attendees. HHF staff were also actively greeting visitors from all over the world this past year as they purposely traveled to our

Scandinavian Heritage Park. These activities were funded through the Oarsman Annual Fund.

Gifts of any amount are appreciated. HHF has a secure online giving option. For more information please visit our website www.hostfestheritage.org.

Høstfest-Heritage Foundation. As a permanent foundation, HHF benefits donors by identifying priority areas, creating gift opportunities and being faithful stewards of donors' generous gifts. The HHF benefits our Scandinavian culture and heritage programs by accepting and administering charitable gifts for both current and future needs. The HHF is a 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit (Federal ID 41-1960917) so gifts to HHF are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. In addition, the HHF permanent endowment funds qualify for the North Dakota Legacy Tax Credit. Please consult your financial advisor or contact the HHF office for more information.

You can support these funds or the general work of the HHF by sending your gift to Høstfest-Heritage Foundation, PO Box 1347, Minot, North Dakota 58702- 1347 or make your gift online at www.hostfestheritage.org. Remember to designate your gift to the fund you wish to support.

For more information, please contact:
Ritchie Houge
(701) 852-1027
rhougehhf@srt.com

2015 MEMORIALS AND DONATIONS

MEMORIALS:

Undesignated memorials

- **Monrad Ness**
- Given by Julie & James Rees
- **Denora Clinton**
- Given by Loren & Jan Ness
- **Ramona Buettner**
- Given by Larry & Joan Grindy
- Given by Ed & Jackie Bjork
- Given by Ramona Buettner Estate
- Given by Trapper's Cove Home Owners Association
- Given by Hazel G. Ostrom
- Given by Glenda S. Kivley
- Given by J. Kelly & Glenn Klebe
- Given by Myron & Shirley Thompson
- Given by Lora Bendickson

- Given by Jade & Kristie Parkinson
- Given by Gordon & Candis Zietz
- Given by Joseph & Kelly Schmidt
- Given by Keith & Jerilyn Dukart

Heritage House Memorial

- **Betty Lee**
- Given by John Sinn
- **Rueben Rue**
- Given by John Sinn

John & Olive Sinn Endowment for Park Maintenance Memorial

- **Dan Draovitch**
- Given by Carroll & Noreen Erickson
- **Leland Erickson**
- Given by Carroll & Noreen Erickson
- **Glenn Erickson**
- Given by Carroll & Noreen Erickson

DONATIONS:

Park Grounds Donations

- **Chance Wilkerson**

Undesignated Donation

- **David & Myrna DeMers**
- **Brekke Tours & Travel**
- **Rustad Tours**
- **Home Spun Tours**
- **Verla Rostad**
- **Echo Kjallberg**

**DONATION TO HOSTFEST-HERITAGE FOUNDATION:
BNSF - \$5,000.00**



Høstfest-Heritage Foundation Planned Giving Resource Center

The work of the Scandinavian Heritage Association membership and its friends is appreciated by the thousands who visit the Park each year. The legacies built through this effort are a testament to our Scandinavian values.

The HHF recognizes how important it is for each of us to help the next generation appreciate our heritage. We also understand that transferring the values necessary for the vision and building of the Park is as important as transferring our lifetime accumulation of assets.

The HHF Planned Giving Resource Center (www.hhflegacy.org) is a tremendous place to seek out information on how you can meet personal estate planning goals AND learn more about how you can assure the future of the Scandinavian Heritage Association or charitable non-profits important to you.

The HHF is your resource for being proactive and not leaving your life's work and your legacy to chance. Please take the time to visit our Planned Giving Resource Center online. You can sign up for our e-newsletter, get our 28-page Planning Your Legacy guide and access many other helpful brochures.

**For Us Today,
For Them Tomorrow!**
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A Christmas Tale
from Telemark
by Arland O. Fiske

THE “OLD TIMES” in Norway, about which we children of the immigrants often fantasize with nostalgia, was in many ways steeped in the Dark Ages. They had, however, a magic that is lost in our world of high technology. They didn’t have either our conveniences or world view. They often lived a lifetime in the valley of their birth until the nurturing earth reclaimed them.

It was a world in which the imagination was allowed to grow without the limitations of scientific verification. The woods, valleys, rivers and ocean were alive with mystery. People who lived up in the mountains didn’t worry much about world issues. They usually didn’t hear of them until they had become history. Their world was often limited to a sojourner who lived by his ability to tell stories which regaled the listeners and held them spell-bound through the long and dark hours of winter.

The story of Jon of the Black Croft (a croft is a small enclosed field) is

such a tale set in the mountains of Telemark, to the northwest of Skien. The magic of the tale centers near Morgedal, one of the beauty spots in that land of the North.

Jon’s father had built his cottage on a high plateau overlooking the prosperous valley below. The farmstead consisted of a cottage, a low stable and a hay shed. Above the buildings were forests of fir trees. Like so many others, Jon’s father went to the Lofoten Islands to risk his life in the hope of getting a good catch of cod.

Normally, the fish didn’t start to run until the New Year, but sometimes they were lucky and the catch would begin a few weeks before Christmas. They called this “Advent fishing.” The seas were often stormy. Many a man and boy did not return to home and family again. As a reminder of those out at sea, a model ship was hung above the nave or chancel in the parish church.

Jon’s father also took to peddling

and trading in the years of his youth before settling down to wife and child. Jon’s mother had now been a widow for many years and she feared for her son’s future with the poor catch of cod in the Lofotens. The drought and poor prices for produce offered no encouragement either. But she kept on working, making clothes of “vadmél,” homespun cloth. These could be ornamented with silver buttons fashioned from coins.

Jon’s mother wanted him to emigrate to America where so many of their relatives had gone. But since she would not go along, Jon would not go either. Nothing she could say would persuade him otherwise.

He half-believed in the magic of the “old times” that could turn a person’s fortunes around. Out of the dim past, the Nokken, Hulder and Fossegrim

(sprites or fairies from the rivers, woodlands and waterfalls) might still emerge to dazzle the eyes of a weary traveller with a lovely farmstead if one acted quickly to claim it. His dream was to claim the legend of the “enchanted valley.” It could become his if it ever appeared before his eyes and if he would immediately hurl a piece of steel into the wall of the building pictured in the mirage, and then recover the steel while it was still burning hot. The legend of the enchanted valley was an aspiration to people of Jon’s time as Eldorado was to Spanish explorers in America.

It was Christmas eve, one of the most magical times of the year. The Yuletide menu at the Black Croft for Jon and his mother was spare that year, the cod harvest yielding hardly a thing. But yet they shared with the pastor and his family such as they had. Jon went into the woods to find trees for their cottage as well as the parsonage, plus some juniper branches to be strewn on the floor for fragrance.

When Jon delivered the tree to the parsonage (“presthus”), he was welcomed cordially, despite their difference in social classes. They did not send him home empty, but filled his stomach with julekakke and fattigmand, favorite pastries to this day among Norwegians. The return trip on skis up the mountain side was slow because he was given a bundle of yule-sheaf (grain) for the birds and a side of pork for his Christmas dinner, plus two silver marks, equivalent to a day’s wage in the woods.

It was dark when Jon returned home. His mother was out in the stable milking the cows. Jon finished the chores and gave each animal an extra measure since it was Christmas eve. Legend had it that when the farmer locked the barn that Holy Night all the animals and feathered creatures were given the gift of speech to praise the Christ-Child. Then they went to sleep facing Bethlehem. The wise farmer would also remember the “Julenisse,” the jolly bearded Brownie, with milk and porridge, or else a strangled animal might await him on Christmas morning.

On the way from the stable to the cottage, he stopped to look into the heavens for the Bethlehem star, like a

lantern in the distance peering over the wooded mountains. Upon entering the cottage, Jon was greeted by the light of the Yule Candle and the fresh scent of juniper.

On Christmas morning, Jon was up early to attend matins at the parish church. The rich and the wealthier classes came in their cutters pulled by prancing horses ringing with bells. Skis were the transportation of the poor. Jon racked up his skis and entered the candlelit nave.

As Jon left the church, he met Kirsti, a friend of the pastor’s lame daughter, Ingeborg. They hadn’t seen each other since confirmation. She had stayed at the parsonage to help with the household duties while being instructed for the rite of passage. But her home was not in that parish.

Several years went by and Jon was now twenty-five, looking for work as he hiked near Morgedal (the home of Sondre Norheim, father of modern skiing). A lost kitten, pure white in color, caught his eye as he travelled in the dusk. It was lonesome and hungry, like Jon.

This formed a bond of companionship. Around the next bend was a farmstead. In the fading light of day he recognized a voice, but not the face.

It had been several more years now since he had seen Kirsti and he could scarcely recognize her at first. The kitten was hers, too. It turned out to be a happy meeting as well as a welcome meal. Kirsti’s father was unable to do farm work. He walked with a cane and moved about the farmstead with care, his sight having failed. He had advertised for help, but no one responded. The harvest of hay was too much work even for a strong girl like Kirsti to cut, dry and stack, and to feed the cattle when winter came. So Jon found a job waiting for him.

The hay harvest went well until Kirsti hit a rock and bent the scythe. In attempting to straighten it, the blade broke. As they returned to the farmstead, the landscape took on a new appearance before Jon’s eyes. It was like magic, the magic of the mountain fairies. Kirsti walked ahead while Jon was held spellbound by the vision. Right in the midst of the glowing sun, Kirsti appeared as radiant as a princess. Was this real or was this an

illusion conjured by the Huldgers?

Quickly, Jon took a piece of steel from the broken scythe and hurled it into the farmstead. Then he hurried with all his might past Kirsti and her aged father. “Do you believe in the tale of the Enchanted Croft, Kirsti?” he shouted. “If you truly do, then come and help me find the sign. They found the piece of broken blade firmly lodged in the stable wall. It was too hot to touch.

In his excitement, Jon exclaimed, “Now I have won the farmstead, field and the magic princess from the Huldgers, Kirsti!” She stood staring at him in amazement, wondering what all this meant. Reality returned to Jon in a moment and he said apologetically to her, “But ‘twas only a fairy tale, Kirsti. This only happens in the world of make-believe that the poor boy wins the prize. Only in storyland does Askeladden get half the kingdom and princess to wife. In real life the cotter’s son wins only poverty and hard days.”

Jon was about to walk away in his disillusionment when Kirsti called: “But wait, Jon. Perhaps it is no fairy tale. What if I told you...”

He turned to look at her again and realized that the legend of the enchanted croft was for real.

It was stories like this that kept life interesting and made the imaginations sparkle in the “old days” of Norway. If you were to visit the enchanting scenery of those mountains, rivers and valleys, you’d begin to wonder, as only children are able, that maybe the fairy tales are true.



I’m indebted to Olav K. Lundeberg’s book *The Enchanted Valley - A Story and Legend of Christmas in Telemark in the Old Time*, published in 1937, for this fascinating tale. The book was about to be discarded from a church library in Arlington, Ohio, where my son Paul was interning. Recognizing its worth, he sent it to me in time for my Christmas reading. Keep your eyes open for libraries about to discard old books. You may find a gem.

SCANDINAVIAN SOCIETY NEWS...

Souris Valley Danish Society NEWS

Danish Immigrant Museum purchases Elim Children's Home property

On October 5, the Museum of Danish America closed on the purchase of land that adjoins its current property, adding five acres to its grounds. The land, purchased from the recently-dissolved First Baptist Church with the help of the congregation and a number of individual donors, is the site of the former Elim Children's Home.



From 1890 to 1961 the Elk Horn Lutheran Church

operated a children's home in a two-story house, and nearly 300 boys and girls passed through its doors. At times there were as many as 30 children living and working there. Following its closure, the home was privately owned and later destroyed by fire.

In 1983, 20 acres of the site was donated to the organizing body of The Danish Immigrant Museum (now Museum of Danish America) by the Elk Horn Lutheran Church for the construction of the museum building.

"For many years, the museum's Board of Directors has felt that, should the Elim Children's Home property become available, because of its location, proximity, and historic nature, the museum should acquire it," stated

John Mark Nielsen, Executive Director of the Museum of Danish America.

In the exhibit video, *Growing Up at Children's Homes*, you can see interviews with former residents of the Elim Children's Home and Chicago Danish Children's Home, recounting memories of everyday life. The museum does not have any immediate plans for development of the site.

Ancestors from Danish island of Mors?

In March 2016, Morslands Historical Museum will open a special exhibition called "The Emigrants." The exhibition tells the story of the large number of people who, over the years, emigrated from the small island of Mors in northwestern Jutland to pursue their happiness across the ocean, in America. For the exhibition, Morslands Historical Museum is looking for partners who can help provide knowledge about the emigration from Mors and Denmark as a whole and facilitate contact with descendants of emigrants from Mors. They would like to get in touch with people who have letters, pictures, artifacts, diaries, etc., with relation to their ancestors, who left Mors. They would also like to know if any of them still carry on with some of the local traditions from the island or from Denmark in general.

Contact: anders.have@museummors.dk.



Morslands Historical Museum

Dakota Finnish Society NEWS

Finns to celebrate 'Little Christmas'

Once again we had a productive Høstfest with our beef stew and bread pudding. We had enough volunteers to manage the booth and all went well.

Our Pikku-joulu (Little Christmas) will be on Saturday, December 12, 2015, beginning at noon, in the lower level of the Visitors Center of SHA Park. We will be serving a catered meal starting at 12:30 pm, have entertainment throughout the afternoon and many, many door prizes. All Finns and friends welcome. The sauna will be hot and bring your swimsuit and a towel and Bruce Carlson will treat you well in the sauna.

Finnish Independence Day is celebrated on December 6 each year. This is the 98th year, so in 2017 they will be celebrating the 100th anniversary and plans are already in place for the large celebration in Finland.



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If you are in Copenhagen during December, do not miss Tivoli's Christmas market, sweets, decorations, lights and entertainment for everyone.

True to tradition, the whole of Tivoli is decorated for the season with spruce and myriads of fairy lights.

The lights, the stalls, and the Christmas music permeating the park together creates the unique Tivoli Christmas atmosphere.

Visitors can also enjoy Tivoli's other cultural Christmas traditions, from the Pixie Band playing at various points around the Gardens, through the big Lucia procession with a hundred-strong choir, to the daily fireworks festival running from December 25 to 27 and again from December 31 to January 3.

Tivoli's numerous rides and games are open as always, while restaurants and eating spots are ready with all those Christmas delicacies.

The permanent commercial shops

are supplemented by around 60 stalls of varying sizes, selling food, sweets, hot drinks, Christmas decorations, knitted products, leather products, crafts, deli items and more.

In the Tivoli Concert Hall, a team made up of some of Denmark's best singers and performers will bring you the Come To-

gether theater concert, which has already received great acclaim both in Denmark and abroad.

The very entertaining show has no dialogue and can be enjoyed across all language barriers.

You can even pay a visit to Father Christmas (see photo on left).

View activities at www.tivoli.dk and www.tivoligardens.com.

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