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# Romerikslaget News

March 2015



## Greetings from President Joel Botten



Hope this issue finds you happy, healthy and looking forward to spring, then summer and September 16-19, 2015 when Romerikslag and Solørlag will meet in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Our destination is the Best Western Riverfront Hotel, 1835 Rose Street, telephone: 608-781-7000. Room rate is: \$84.99 plus tax. Reserve by August 15, 2015.

La Crosse is a fascinating city of about 52,000 residents lying along side the Mississippi River in the spectacular glacial drift-less area near the junctions of Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin. It is a college town, home to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Viterbo University and Western Technical College. It is also a regional technology and medical hub.

La Crosse was incorporated in 1856, but has earlier roots with the French fur traders who traveled the Mississippi in the 17th century. The name originated from the game with sticks which resembled a bishop's crozier or "la crosse" in French. The game was played by the Native Americans there. La Crosse has twin-city relationships with cities in six foreign countries including Førde, Norway.

The following list of community events gives us a glimpse into La Crosse life and culture: October Fest, River Fest, Freedom Fest, Great River Jazz Fest, Irish Fest, Wiener Fest, Downtown Mardi Gras, Cameron Park Farmer's Market, Historic La Crosse Days, Winter Rec Fest, The Skyrockets New Years Eve Celebration, Hmong New Year Parade, Rotary Lights Display, La Crosse Labor Day Parade and Celebration and La Crosse Storytelling Festival.

Several times Maureen and I enjoyed lunch and a walk at Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine off US14 and US61 S. on the southern edge of LaCrosse. We enjoyed the stations of the cross, a beautiful votive chapel and impressive Shrine Church at the top of the walk.

Viterbo College Chapel is very beautiful. The sisters have been praying without ceasing there for about 80 years. Wandering in, we were invited to sit in on the praying by a friendly sister. She explained that a destructive fire threatened the chapel at one time but the fire stopped in the hall outside the entrance.

Your stevne planning committee met in January and will again in May. Already exciting programs have been discussed and booked. We hope you will mark your calendars and journey to La Crosse for another great stevne.

"On Wisconsin"!

Hilsen,

Joel



Akershus Fylke  
Ovre Romerike-  
Eidsvoll, Feiring,  
Gjerdrum, Hurdal,  
Nannestad, Nes,  
Ullensaker  
Nedre Romerike -  
Aurskog-Høland,  
Blaker, Enebakk, Fet,  
Hakadal, Lørenskog,  
Nittedal, Rælingen,  
Setskog, Skedsmo,  
Sørum  
Follo - Frogn, Kråk-  
stad, Nesodden,  
Oppegård, Ski,  
Vestby, ås  
Vestre Akershus -  
Asker, Bærum  
Oslo Fylke

**Your July Romerikslaget Newsletter will include complete stevne information and the registration form.**

## Genealogy Tips from Deb Jarver

### Why the X?

In researching Norwegian names on the various websites out there, I was often confused by the occasional name Xtian, Xten, Xopher or Xiania for a location. This puzzled me for a long time until I realized that the X or Xt represented "Christ." The X will show up occasionally in the digitized parish registers on the Digital Archives website in names like Christian, Christopher, Kristen, Kristensen, Christophersen or for a city like Christiania (also known as Oslo, but you knew that). I surmised that the "X" was just a short cut used in the past by Norwegians in a hurry...but that is apparently not the case.

As it turns out, the "X" has been an acceptable representation of the word "Christ" for hundreds of years. Today, some individuals freely use Xmas to represent the word Christmas with mixed acceptance. It's usage is know as a Christogram, the "mas" in Xmas is the Old English word for "mass."

This is from Wikipedia (which we know may or may not be true but it makes sense to me):  
"The word "Christ" and its compounds, including "Christmas", have been abbreviated in English for at least the past 1,000 years, long before the modern "Xmas" was commonly used. "Christ" was often written as "Xp" or "Xt"; there are references in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as far back as 1021. This X and P arose as the uppercase forms of the Greek letters  $\chi$  (Ch) and  $\rho$  (R) used in ancient abbreviations for  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$  (Greek for "Christ"), and are still widely seen in many Eastern Orthodox icons depicting Jesus Christ. The labarum, an amalgamation of the two Greek letters rendered as  $\chi\rho$ , is a symbol often used to represent Christ in Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christian Churches.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and the OED Supplement have cited usages of "X-" or "Xp-" for "Christ-" as early as 1485. The terms "Xtian" and less commonly "Xpian" have also been used for "Christian". The OED further cites usage of "Xtianity" for "Christianity" from 1634. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, most of the evidence for these words comes from "educated Englishmen who knew their Greek."

So, if you are searching for a name beginning with "christ" you would be wise to also consider a word that starts with an "X." I suppose an "X" may also show up in the middle of a word, however, I haven't run across that situation yet.

For example: Go to the Digital Archives of Norway website (<http://arkivverket.no/arkivverket/Digitalarkivet>), and select "Transcribed Parish Registers", "Search Page Baptisms". Under Geography select "Choose All" and enter xt\* as a last name. Then hit "Search" and you will get 447 hits. The first one is at Asker, Akershus for Erich Pedersen, baptized 7 Oct 1804. Some of the sponsors are listed as: Barbara Xtens, Xtine Xtophers, Xtan Løkke, and Xtian Hansen.



*Deb Jarvar*



## Genealogy Tips from Deb Jarver

### Library of Congress, Historic American Newspapers

One day, I stumbled upon the website of the Chronicling America, Historic American Newspapers collection at the Library of Congress. This is a searchable database of America's historic newspaper pages from 1836 to 1922. Most states are represented...but not Wisconsin which is what I would have liked. However, I was able to find a marriage license record for my husband's great aunt in the Minneapolis Journal in 1905. This was a great find and it led me to plug in some other names...so three hours sped by and I didn't get much else done that day.

Below is the website, remember to click on **ADVANCED SEARCH**. I found the best results by filling in the "...with the phrase" box, this works fine but it is not perfect as the digital recognition will find words spelled a little differently and think that is what you want. You can narrow the search down to a specific state, newspaper, language, year or date range but I would recommend not limiting your search too much, you might miss an interesting article. Try this if you have some spare time and a comfy chair because you will probably be sitting awhile.  
[http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/#tab=tab\\_search](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/#tab=tab_search).

*Happy researching.*

*Deb Jarver*



1916-2016

SAVE THE DATE!

### NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN Bygdelagenes Fellesraad CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND THE CELEBRATION OF OUR 100TH YEAR OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BYGDELAG MOVEMENT IN AMERICA. THIS WILL BE A CELEBRATION OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CULTURE, COMMON HISTORY AND COMMUNITIES OF THOSE WITH NORWEGIAN ANCESTRY.

THE CELEBRATION WILL BE HELD

MAY 5-8, 2016 IN MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA.

FREQUENTLY UPDATED INFORMATION ON THE EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING CAN BE FOUND AT:

[HTTP://WWW.FELLESRAAD.COM/CENTENNIAL](http://www.fellesraad.com/centennial)



# Romerikslaget and Solørlag America Joint 2015 Stevne

## Saturday Night Banquet

### Ole and Sven

Phil Dybdahl and his partner/son-in-law Gary Smithback sing interesting songs, many with a Norwegian twist, tell Ole and Lena jokes and provide light-hearted and amusing entertainment.



## Lapland, Yesterday and Today

### Chris Falteisek

Chris's program will give you insight to the land of the Sámi people, where World War II, mining and the railway system changed their lives, leaving their cultural traditions and lifestyles untouched. Today, Lapland is a multicultural society where the Sámi people are part of the Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian and Russian lands.

## Norskedalen, the Norwegian Valley

### On the Stevne Bus Tour

Norskedalen (which means the Norwegian Valley), is a nature and heritage center exploring the natural beauty, regional history and traditional Norwegian heritage of the region. Norskedalen has a carefully preserved collection of the original log and stone buildings crafted by the immigrants (mainly Norwegian) in the second half of the 1800's. The **Bekkum Homestead**, is a Norwegian 'tun' or farmstead, where you can see first hand how the settlers lived on and with the land.



Norskedalen encompassing about 400 acres of scenic coulee (valley) along Poplar Creek. The 6 miles of trails take you through pine plantations, over the cold, clear, creek, past many springs bubbling up into crystal pools and spilling into the creek, along wooded hillsides and rocky outcrops of goat prairies, and along the valley floor.

Norskedalen's collection includes artifacts brought from Norway, Native American artifacts and an inviting hands-on nature room. The **Skumsrud Heritage Farm**, located approximately 4 miles from the main Norskedalen grounds is a 44 acre open air summer museum site with buildings such as the first school house in the area and the oldest surviving log building in Vernon County, the Skumsrud cabin.

More information available at [Norskedalen.org](http://Norskedalen.org).

# Romerikslaget and Solørlag America Joint 2015 Stevne

**September 16-19, 2015**

**Best Western  
Riverfront Hotel,  
1835 Rose Street  
La Crosse, WI  
608-781-7000**



**Room rate: \$84.99 & tax  
Reserve by August 15, 2015**

At the BEST WESTERN Riverfront Hotel guests enjoy waterfront, resort style accommodations with well-appointed guest rooms designed with ultimate comfort in mind featuring cable satellite television with HBO® and free high-speed Internet access.

This La Crosse hotel, nestled along the shores of Black River, also features complimentary breakfast Monday thru Friday and free daily newspaper. The hotel has a private beach and boat dock. and onsite water park with water slides, geysers, and a full arcade. •Fitness Center, •Pool, •Meeting Room,• Pets Allowed,• Restaurant Onsite,• Hot Tub,• Room Service,• High Speed Internet For more information, go to BestWestern.com.



***Vesterheim is just 60 miles from La Crosse, WI.***

**Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum** in [Decorah, Iowa](#) is the national [Norwegian-American](#) museum and heritage center, with over 24,000 artifacts, 12 historic buildings, a Folk Art School, and a library and archives. This treasure showcases the most extensive collection of Norwegian- American artifacts in the world. Some of its buildings are on the [National Register of Historic Places](#). Vesterheim's exhibitions explore the diversity of American immigration through the lens of the Norwegian-American experience and highlight the best in historic and contemporary Norwegian folk and fine arts.

Founded in 1877 as the Norwegian-American Historic Museum, it began as a part of nearby Luther College. In 1967, the Norwegian-American Museum incorporated, becoming a separate entity from Luther College. In 1977 it added Vesterheim to its name and moved into a larger location, a grand Italianate building in downtown Decorah.

The name Vesterheim appropriately comes from the Norwegian for "western home". The museum sponsors educational events, publications, and lectures related to its mission. Vesterheim's Folk Art School offers classes in painting, woodworking, knifemaking, fiber arts, and cooking in the Norwegian tradition. Each year it presents "The National Exhibition of Folk Art in the Norwegian Tradition" in these traditional Norwegian folk arts: knitting, rosemaling, weaving, wood carving, and knife-making.

## Membership News

### Priscilla Sorknes Grefsrud

Lag Organizer, Charter Member,  
Past-President and Genealogist

*Romerikslaget i Amerika lost one of its charter members and staunchest supporters when Priscilla Sorknes passed away December 31, 2014. Priscilla was instrumental in forming Romerikslaget i Amerika. She is the one who organized the first planning meeting in October 1989, which was held at Minnehaha Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. Priscilla was the first president of Romerikslaget i Amerika, serving 1990-1993. She served as Vice President for Genealogy 1993-2000 and as an editor of the newsletter 1990-1996. Priscilla was involved in planning many stevner, especially the genealogy portion, and she often was the pianist.*



Priscilla Sorknes Grefsrud died peacefully at home on December 31, 2014 in Sedona, Arizona at the age of 82. Priscilla is survived by children, Mark "Nate" Nathaniel Grefsrud (Sue Fisher), Pauline Gustafson (Terry Frovik); grandchildren, Amanda Gustafson Schepler (Rich), Erik Gustafson (Taylee Morris), Sara Massmann (Johann); sister, Verla Dobervich; 2 great-grandchildren and many in-laws, nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Alfred and Hilda (Sorknes) Johnson (Moorhead); husband, Earl Grefsrud (Minneapolis); daughter, Lorinda Grefsrud (Las Vegas); son-in-law, Rollyn Gustafson (Minneapolis); son-in-law, Larry Maxwell (Las Vegas). Priscilla was born on May 16, 1932 in Moorhead, Minnesota to Alfred and Hilda (Sorknes) Johnson. She graduated from Concordia College in 1952 with degrees in Music, English and German. She married Earl Grefsrud in 1951. Priscilla was active in the reactivation of the Solorlag and Romerikslaget and served as genealogist in both organizations. Priscilla had a love of learning all her life as she was fluent in German, Norwegian and Swedish and could read three other languages. Priscilla loved to travel and spent as much time as she could manage in Norway, many times to facilitate opportunities to research genealogy. She led many tours to Norway for others, often incorporating research and sites specific to the attendees. Interment Evergreen Memorial Cemetery, Moorhead, MN. Memorials preferred to Mindekirken.

### Beatrice M. Stenerson

Beatrice Marie (Nygaard) Stenerson, 94, died Tuesday, January 13, 2015. Beatrice was born May 28, 1920, in Nevis, MN, the only child of Oscar and Lotie (Larson) Nygaard. In 1940, Beatrice graduated from Lutheran Bible Institute in Minneapolis, MN. She worked as a night nurse, medical assistant and a parish worker. In 1959, Beatrice married Orville Stenerson of Dodge, ND. Their two sons were born in 1961 (John) and 1966 (Dan). Orville passed away in 2013. Beatrice was very active in whatever church she was attending. She and Orville traveled to 48 states and 14 countries including the Holy Land. Burial will follow in Riverside Cemetery, Fargo.



*Beatrice and Orv were active members of Romerikslaget since joining in 1993. Beatrice was a first cousin to Eileen Gulbranson.*



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***Happy 98th Birthday  
Romerikslaget member  
Doris Michelson.***

# Romerikslaget i Amerika Membership

## Lag Officers and Directors

### President • Joel Botten (2012-2015)

410 W. 9th St., Mankato, MN 56001  
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### V. P. for Membership • Susan Waldera (2014-2016)

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### V. P. for Genealogy • Deb Jarver (2014-2017)

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### Secretary • Eunice Helgeson (2013-2016)

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### Treasurer • Mary Gross (2012-2015)

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### Director • Melvin Slettehaugh (2013-2016)

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### Director • Open (2014-2017)

### Past President • Marcia Hamilton

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**Past Presidents:** Priscilla Sorknes, Andreas Jordahl Rhude, Cathryn Berntson Huntsman†, Earl Grefsrud†, Eileen Gulbranson, Marcia Hamilton

**Website:** [www.romerikeusa.org](http://www.romerikeusa.org)

Published by Romerikslaget i Amerika © 2014 Version 092014

*An ad policy has been adopted by the Board of Romerikslaget. It reads as follows: Individuals or companies can submit articles that include contact information but do not include any prices. The lag Board reserves the right to edit or reject any submissions and will suggest to non-members that they join or make a donation to the lag.*

## Romerikslaget i Amerika

To continue membership, or become a new member, complete and mail this form.

Name (1): \_\_\_\_\_

Lag ancestral area: \_\_\_\_\_

(from listing on back page of Newsletter)

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Lag ancestral area: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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Individual \$15.00    \_\_\_ New    \_\_\_ Renewal

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\_\_\_ Please mail \_\_\_ email \_\_\_ me a sample newsletter

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\_\_\_ I am renewing my membership for 2015. Enclosed is my check.

**Payable to: Romerikslaget**

**Mail form & check to:**

Susan Waldera  
N6062 N Skutley Rd  
Taylor, WI 54659

**Romerikslaget News** is the official publication of Romerikslaget i Amerika and is published each March/Jul/Nov. Members receive the newsletter, stevne registration packet, access to records of Norwegian government and church records, Membership Directory and the help of our genealogist.

Romerikslaget i Amerika is a Norwegian American association whose members have ancestral roots or present-day ties to the area that nearly surrounds Oslo, Norway, called Romerike. The lag was founded in September 1990 to honor the unique culture of Romerike and to strengthen the bonds with the parishes of our ancestors.



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## **Norwegian Knitting Sensation**

### **Arne Nerjordet and Carlos Zachrison**

In January, they participated in Vogue Knitting Live in New York, Minneapolis, Winona, and Washington DC exhibiting their Knitted Christmas Balls and selling their popular knitting books.



Their books have sold more than 400,000 copies worldwide. Below is from an interview by Norway.org. news and events. *Before your knitting took off, you were both working as fashion designers. What made you leave fashion for knitting?*

“In 2009 we started feeling that the fashion industry, with its two collections a year cycle and trend of disposable fashion, was starting to look like a world we did not want to be a part of anymore. During a knitting collaboration with the Japanese fashion designer Rei Kawakubo and Comme des Garçons, we came up with the idea of knitting Christmas balls. They were originally meant to be used as decorations for Kawakubo’s stores in Tokyo, Paris, New York and London. Instead, she decided to sell them for 140 U.S. dollars apiece. As much as this annoyed us, it also made us realize we were probably on to something good here. We decided to take the opposite approach and find a way for everyone to be able to afford them instead. In 2010, our first book, *Christmas Balls to Knit*, was released in Norway and soon sold over 60,000 copies. Today, the book has been translated into 14 languages and is doing well all over the world.



We believe knitting is part of a bigger trend, which has all to do with slow living and the value of local traditions. It puts people in a certain mood and it feels authentic. In many ways, slow living is a reaction to the digital world we live in today. Knitting brings people together; it is social but at the same time relaxing and therapeutic. Once you start, you can’t stop!”