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Romerikslaget

News

March 2020



A Real Witch Hunt

The term “witch trials” probably brings to mind Salem Village in Massachusetts and the atrocities that took place there in 1692. But, did you know that witches were also burned at the stake in Norway?

Superstition and fear were the driving forces behind people all over Europe being accused of witchcraft in the 1500 and 1600s, and Norway did not escape that hysteria. Between 1573 and 1696, an average of one “witch” per year was burned at the stake to purportedly cleanse the area of evil.

The Vardø witch trials, which took place in the village of Vardø in Finnmark in Northern Norway in 1621, were the first major witch trials of Norway. It was believed the Northern part of Norway was more evil than elsewhere because of the severe cold, the strong north winds and being on the outskirts of Christianity. It was also believed that Satan lived in these desolate lands and therefore, witches must inhabit the area also.

If sailing weather near Vardø was stormy and treacherous, it was blamed on the Norwegian witches. Actually, EVERY disaster was blamed on Satan and the poor people who were accused of witchcraft suffered the consequences. The Sami people, who lived in the area, were also thought to have a special connection with the Devil. Their ancestral pagan practices alarmed the Christian authorities and some Sami men were accused of witchcraft and executed. Women from Vardø were tortured until they “confessed” to sorcery and many named others who were also put on trial. If they survived the torture, which included hot irons and water submersion, they were most likely burned at the stake.

The Steilneset Memorial in Vardø, Finnmark commemorates the victims of the witch trials. It was unveiled on June 23, 2011 and is intended to be a way to atone for the injustices of the past. It is thought to be on the execution site of 91 individuals (14 men and 77 women) accused of practicing witchcraft in 1691.

I have a friend who was told by her Norwegian relatives that one of their ancestors was burned at the stake in Norway. She has of yet, been unable to prove it. How fascinating but sad to think this might have happened to one of your family members. Historical records do contain the names of some of the “witches,” in case you have a connection to Vardø.

There are many articles online about the Vardø witch trials. An interesting one was published by the *Norwegian American* in 2016. Check it out at: <https://www.norwegianamerican.com/the-evil-north-varDOS-witch-trials/>.

Deb Jarvar, Genealogist, Romerikslaget i Amerika



Akershus Fylke,
Ovre Romerike-
Eidsvoll, Feiring,
Gjerdrum, Hurdal,
Nannestad, Nes,
Ullensaker, *Nedre*
Romerike -Aurskog-
Høland, Blaker,
Enebakk, Fet,
Hakadal,
Lørenskog, Nitte-
dal, Rælingen,
Setskog, Skedsmo,
Sørums, *Follo* -
Frogn, Kråkstad,
Nesodden,
Oppegård, Ski,
Vestby, ås *Vestre*
Akershus - Asker,
Bærum
Oslo Fylke

Fellesraad Bygdelaag

The Fellesraad-Norway House Partnership

Mary Gross, Romerikslaget Treasurer

The Fellesraad, the umbrella organization of all bygdelaag, has developed a partnership with Norway House to raise money for the brand new Bibliotek (Norwegian for library). Some of you may know that Dr. John Haugo, a long-time Norway House donor and former Board member, created what's called "The Haugo Challenge". He generously offered to match dollar-for-dollar all bygdelaag donations to Norway House construction up to \$200,000.

Responding to this challenge, the Fellesraad has offered matches to its bygdelaag and individual members. As of October of 2019, these gifts have totaled \$203,134.27, which gives the Bibliotek project over \$400,000 to apply to its \$1.5 million goal.

In September of 2019, Fellesraad and Norway House submitted a grant request in the amount of \$200,000 to the Minnesota Historical Society, which administers the relevant portion of Minnesota Legacy Grant program. No decision on this grant request has been made as yet.

In October of 2019, the Fellesraad Board voted to offer a matching challenge to its bygdelaag in the amount of \$45,000. With this dollar-for-dollar match, donors can create an additional \$90,000 for the Bygdelaag project. Norway House has also begun efforts to find additional corporate and foundation funding sources. However, the primary and greatest funding source will be from individuals or bygdelaag. Any amount will help make the Norway House Bibliotek a great resource for all of us.

Romerikslaget has done its part; we donated \$250 in 2014 when Fellesraad was matching donations for the construction of Norway House. We donated \$200 in 2017 for another match by Fellesraad. In 2019, we donated \$500 for the Bibliotek in honor of Jon Pederson.

A Romerikslaget charter member, Arlene Olson, died on January 20, 2020 at age 89. Despite being one of the original charter members, Arlene had never been able to attend a stevne until 2011, when her daughter, Sandra, was able to accompany her to Austin, MN. Since then, Arlene has been a loyal stevne participant, along with her twin daughters, Sandra & Sheryl, never missing one stevne. She struggled with health problems but never let that stop her, and actively participated in each stevne with an amazing spirit of cheerfulness & grace. She has been an example of Norwegian strength and friendship to all of us!

In Arlene's honor, the Romerikslaget Board has voted to donate \$500.00 to the Norway House Bibliotek. With the Fellesraad matching donation, our Romerikslaget has now donated a total of \$2000.00 to the Bibliotek. I think all members can be proud to know that you are contributing to this wonderful project while honoring some of our esteemed Norwegian elders.

If individuals are moved to donate to the Bibliotek, please remember to write checks to Norway House and put Bibliotek on the memo line so the Fellesraad match will double your donation. Any amount is welcome!

The Bibliotek will be an integral part of Norway House. Bygdelaag and other relevant books and manuscripts will be stored in a temperature-controlled environment and can be checked out by members. Norway House is hoping to celebrate a month dedicated to family history; host conferences of a wide variety; conduct many classes, seminars and webinars; and offer to make genealogical expertise both locally and from Norway itself.

The final goal will be to create new Norway House and Bygdelaag members and increase membership to a much greater level. The Bibliotek will be a critical component in transforming Norway House into The National Norwegian Center in America.



Fellesraad Bygdelag

Fellesraad Annual Meeting May 1-2, 2020

The Bygdelagenes Fellesraad will hold their Annual Meeting on Friday and Saturday, May 1-2. This event is open to all Bygdelag members. Dr. Terje Joranger, Executive Director of the Norwegian Emigrant Museum located near Hamar, Norway, will be the featured presenter. (See article on the museum on the following page.)

Dr. Joranger is an expert in Norwegian emigration and will share historical information on the three emigration waves from Norway which corresponds with Norwegian immigration waves in the U.S. So, bring your ancestors' emigration information to tie into our guest's historical knowledge.

The Bygdelagenes Fellesraad was involved in the establishment of the Norwegian Emigrant Museum in 1955. So, our partnership with the Museum is relevant in this respect. Discussed will be the Bygdelagenes Fellesraad and the Bygdelag movement in a historical context and point to our contributions to the community building among Norwegian immigrants and offspring in the US.

Dr. Joranger is playing a major role in both the commemoration of the bicentennial of Norwegian Emigration in 2025 in Norway and in planning here in the U. S.

Early Bird Registration is due April 15 and will include lunches. The Early Bird price is \$20/one day or \$25/both days. The registration form will also be posted on the www.fellesraad.com website.

Elaine Helgeson Hasleton, Bygdelagenes Fellesraad, President, www.fellesraad.com

Photos below are courtesy of the Norwegian Emigrant museum.



Elaine Hasleton



Terje Joranger



Norwegian Emigrant Museum

The Norwegian Emigrant Museum

Terje Mikael Hasle Joranger, Ph.D.

Director, The Norwegian Emigrant Museum

The Norwegian Emigrant Museum in Ottestad in Stange near Hamar is the only museum in Norway which focuses in its entirety on emigration from Norway to all parts of the world. In this respect the museum collects, conserves, interprets, and exhibits documentation about those who became immigrants in another country. The museum seeks to understand the general processes connected to the migration movement and relate not only to emigration but also to returned migration and immigration to Norway.

The idea to form an emigrant museum originates from the Nordmanns-Forbundet's (presently Norwegians Worldwide's) involvement in the 1914 centennial commemoration exhibit of the Norwegian constitution in the Frogner Park in Christiania., to "...shed light over the life and working conditions of our fellow emigrated countrymen in foreign surroundings." In 1955 a log cabin was moved from Kindred, North Dakota to the Norwegian Folk Museum in Oslo, which became the Norwegian Emigrant Museum. Norwegian-based and Norwegian American organizations were instrumental including the Nordmanns-Forbundet, Sons of Norway, Bygdelagenes Fellesraad, and the Consul General of Norway in Minneapolis.

In 1972 the museum moved to Hamar, presently the Domkirkeodden Museum. The museum moved to its present location at Ottestad in 1996. Presently eight buildings make up the outdoor museum including the dwelling from Kindred, North Dakota; the Gunderson House from west central Minnesota, and the Norwegian Memorial Church from southeastern Minnesota; the Sacquitne barn, the grainary, and the Bjorgo/Ingvalson House from northeastern Iowa; and the Leet-Christopher schoolhouse from central South Dakota.

The museum collections contains about 2,000 objects, including textiles and paintings which all are to be revised within a two-year period in addition to 20,000 photos, 9,000 America letters, church records from 2,000 Norwegian American Lutheran congregations, audiovisual material, interviews, and private archives from various individuals and organizations. The collections also includes the archives of Norwegians Worldwide with a wide variety of clippings from Norwegian and foreign newspapers, minutes from chapters and forms from almost 1,000 Norwegian emigrants all over the world.

The museum offers several educational tours for pupils and students and welcomes tours from Norway and the United States. The museum encourages scholars to use the archives, and they are welcome to stay in the museum apartment for a moderate price during their research period. The museum will both host the triennial seminar of NAHA-Norway and will be involved in the International Sons of Norway Convention in Hamar in August 2020.

The museum is secretariat for the Bicentennial commemoration of Norwegian emigration to the United States in 2025. The museum will organize activities with themes connected to Norwegian emigration history, returned migration, and immigration. It has also taken the initiative toward organizing a national writing contest in high school on the topic of emigration in cooperation with the Norwegian Historical Association and the Free Speech Foundation.

About 80 percent of the 900,000 – 1,000,000 Norwegian emigrants who left Norway after 1825 went to the United States, although a good number of them returned to Norway later. The United States is central in the museum outreach planning. In the summer of 2019 the Norwegian Emigrant Museum started an internship cooperation with Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah and travelled to Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum, the Norwegian-American Historical Association, and the Nordic Museum. Based on its mission statement, its activities, and network building, the museum will continue playing a relevant role in society.

For more information, check the following website: <https://utvandremuseet.no/en>.

This article has been edited for space considerations.

Romerikslaget and Solørlag America Joint 2020 Stevne

September 16-19, 2020

New Ulm Conference Center
Best Western Plus
2101 S Broadway St.
New Ulm MN 56073
Phone 507-351-6712

Room rate \$109—Cut off 8/16/20



Stevne Activities:



Genealogy research and assistance

Silent Auction to fund genealogy research

Bunad/sweater Banquet with entertainment

Presentations on Norwegian culture

Vendors for Norwegian art and products

Memorial Service

Local history and bus tour to include: Linden Lutheran Church and cemetery, Thormodson Barn, John Armstrong monument, Nora Unitarian Universalist Church on Mount Pisgah, Norwegian Stabbur in Hanska, 1857 Omsrud-Thordson-Torgrimson log cabin, and an 1863 fort site and Indian Hill burial site.



The Omsrud-Thordson-Torgrimson log cabin, located in Lake Hanska County Park. Joel Botten related the history of this family cabin. The following is an excerpt from the history.

The family log cabin on Lake Omsrud was not invaded or destroyed. His wife, Kari's, first cousin, Torgrim Torgrimson, had been kind to the Indians, actually saving one from death due to drowning and exposure when he fell through the ice on Omsrud Lake. Torgrim took him in the cabin, warmed him and saved his life.

When the war began, this Indian came and warned the Torgrimsons and Omsruds (Thordsons today) to go east. The Torgrimsons and Thord and his 4 sons went east to the Sorbel farm in Linden where they stayed for some time. It is not known for sure if they went on to South Bend near Mankato where many of the Linden families had fled for safety. Thord's wife, Kari, would not leave her cabin. She remained and was not molested. The story goes that she felt safe due to her relationship with the Indians. She shared her food, but not an item a certain Indian tried to take from her cabin one day. In desperation, she threw her cold lye floor-washing water on the Indian's legs and, though cold, it burned. The Indian fled in fear. It is thought the Indians respected her as one who has special powers and one to be respected.



The July Romerikslaget newsletter will contain complete stevne information.

Membership News

Happy Birthday Doris

Doris Michelson, a charter member of Romerikslaget, celebrated her 103rd birthday on January 23, 2020! A family party with 28 attending was held in her honor the following weekend at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in West Salem, Wisconsin.

Doris has always been very proud of her Norwegian heritage and her membership in Romerikslaget. She cherishes the friendships she has made in this organization. Doris is pictured here with her son, Steve, and the kransekake that he and his wife made for the occasion.



In Memoriam

Arlene Olson

May 20, 1930 - January 20, 2020

Olson, Arlene N. Age 89 of Coon Rapids. Preceded in death by her husband Leonard; parents Nels and Elsie Bredeson; brother Donald Bredeson; son-in-law, Jeffrey Little. Survived by children Linda (Merlin) Stier, Sandra (Mark) Harvey, Sheryl (Timothy) Lehn, Richard (Wendy) Olson, Darrell (Debra) Olson and Denise (David) Klingbeil; 17 grand children; 35 great grandchildren; sisters Lucille Navarro and Norine (Vern) Kramer; nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were Saturday, January 25, 2020 at Zion Lutheran Church, Anoka. Interment Morningside Memorial Gardens, Coon Rapids. Memorials preferred. Thurston-Lindberg Funeral Home Anoka 763-421-0220.



Members are welcome and encouraged to tell your genealogy story. It is how we get to know each other and who knows, our ancestors might have been neighbors. We won't make that discovery until you have shared your story.

Send your story to the newsletter publisher, Dorothy Mehl, 2111 E North Crescent Spokane, WA 99207 or email dorothymehl112@msn.com.

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 Membership

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Join Romerikslaget i Amerika.

Romerikslaget i Amerika is a Norwegian American association.

Romerikslaget i Amerika

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

Name (1): _____

Lag ancestral area: _____
(from listing on front page of newsletter)

Name (2): _____

Lag ancestral area: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone () _____ Fax _____

E-mail: _____

Dues:

Individual \$15.00 ___ New ___ Renewal

Household (2 person maximum) \$20 ___ New ___ Renewal
and outside the USA if newsletters are emailed rather than mailed.

Norway/Canada (if newsletters are mailed) \$20 ___ New ___ Renewal

(Payable in US Dollars)

___ Please mail ___ email ___ me a sample newsletter

___ I would like to join. Enclosed is my check.

___ I am renewing my membership for 2020. 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, step-by-step 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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Spokane, WA 99207

Check out our Romerikslaget Facebook Group!

Our lag Facebook group called “Romerike i America (Romerikslag)” is growing, with 62 members so far, including several friends who live in Norway! It’s easy to join. First, you need to have a Facebook account, which is free at www.facebook.com. Then just sign in to your own page and enter "Romerike i America" in the finder box at the top, when the group page appears then click on "Join" and submit your request to join.



It’s a great way to share photos from stevne and keep in touch through-out the year!



Members have been sharing genealogy, cultural and history information about Romerike, as well as photos of their own visits to the area. As group administrators, Chris Falteisek and I are happy to answer any questions.

Contact me, Norma Kjenstad Barnes, nkwbarnes@yahoo.com or Chris chrisfalteisek@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you on Facebook!