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# Romerikslaget News

November 2015



Greetings from President Joel Botten



Excitement is building for the biggest Norwegian Bygdelaag gathering since Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, 1999. May 5-8, 2016 join the Bygdelagenes Fellesråd Centennial Celebration at the Double Tree Hotel by Hilton in Brooklyn, Center, Minnesota, a northwest suburb of Minneapolis. Months of planning promises an outstanding experience of fellowship and learning as we honor our Norwegian heritage. The Fellesråd is the umbrella organization that oversees all individual bygdelags.

Your Romerikslaget board and membership has voted to forego a regular stevne meeting in 2016 to be part of this once-in-a-life-time event. We will resume a regular joint stevne with Solørlag in 2017.

Romerikslaget will have a 2016 annual meeting and genealogy help session preceding the Fellesråd Centennial Celebration, on Thursday, May 5, 2016 beginning at 11:00 am at the Double Tree Hotel. It will be followed by a luncheon at 12:00 noon with genealogy research assistance from 1:00-3:00 pm. At 7:00 pm there will be a reception welcoming participants planning to attend the seminars on Friday. As part of the reception, Doug Ohman, popular photographer and picture book publisher, will present a program of photos and information on Norwegian related sites and accomplishments throughout the Midwest. Saturday, seminars will continue and highlights will be a presentation by the popular Stoughton, Wisconsin high school Norwegian folk dancers, the Minneapolis Norwegian Men's Glee Club and a gala banquet. The banquet will include a special speaker and a bunad parade (plan to wear your Norwegian national dress). Sunday is a chance to visit the Norwegian Mindekirken Church services (including lunch) and the new Norway House at 21st and Franklin Ave. A summary of the plans for this great event and a registration form is included in this newsletter. At the bottom of page 2 on the registration form, please indicate if you will attend the 12:00 noon Romerikslag buffet luncheon on Thursday, May 5. Payment will be individual tabs.

Thank you to all who were able to attend the stevne in LaCrosse, Wisconsin in September. We celebrated our 25th Anniversary with a festive cake and a review of our history prepared and presented by Eunice Helegeson. Eunice has served as lag secretary from our beginning in 1990. We even made the papers in Norway. Lag friend, Kjell Aasum, journalist for the Romeriksblad in Romerike, Norway, published a picture of the cake and a short history of our lag. He also advertised the coming Fellesråd Centennial Celebration in 2016 and indicated his hope to attend.

I look forward to visiting with you at the big celebration May 5-8, 2016.

Hilsen,

Joel



Fellesraad  
Celebrates  
100 Years  
May 5-8, 2016

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

# Genealogy News

## “My Family Now and in the Past”

From Deb Jarver

Isn't it exciting to find an ancestor you didn't know you had when researching your family history. Then you can't wait to tell your siblings, children or other relatives and they just don't seem to get it!! How can they not be as excited as you are? Now is the time to instill that sense of interest in your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. There is a wonderful resource online from Canada called "My Family Now and in the Past", and it's free of charge on the Alberta Genealogical Society website: <http://www.abgenealogy.ca/my-family-now>.

The tutorial is designed to provide an interesting and enjoyable introduction to family history. It is primarily designed for children from 6 to 8 years of age but I think it would also work for children a little older than 8. There is a free pdf file you can download, it states that the pdf is 40 pages but the tutorial is only 30. These resources are intended to "sow the seeds" in children in the hopes that they retain the interest in preserving and researching their family history down the road. The material is best done in sections and would also be great for teachers.

*Don't delay, act now before texting and cellphones rule their lives.*

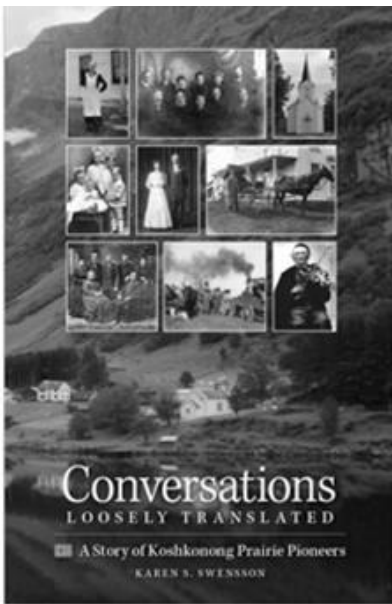


## How Their Journey Became Mine

From Karen S. Swensson

As I approached my 60s, I began to experience a compelling urge to record memories of my parents, both of whom died in their mid-50s, before my three children were old enough to really remember them. I wrote short anecdotal essays at first—how Mom would place tiny silver balls on her Christmas tree cookies with eyebrow tweezers and Dad could produce several different whistles simply by changing the number and position of the fingers he put in his mouth.

Each essay triggered more memories until the collection, which I began referring to as my “family history,” expanded to include grandparents, aunts and uncles, and a cousin—all significant presences during visits to the Nasett family farm where my mother was born and raised. Mom’s sister, fourteen years younger, became my greatest resource, regaling me with fascinating tales of life on a Midwestern tobacco/dairy farm in the mid-1900s, including stories about my great grandparents, who died before I was born.



“Did you know that we are descended from Koshkonong Prairie pioneers?” Aunt Ruby said one day—and my family history project became a genealogical quest.

I was curious about my pioneer ancestors. Who were they, and how exactly did they manage the journey from small farms on the rocky, heavily forested mountains of Norway, to the vast open prairies in the territory of West Konsin in Amerika? My early research attempts were unfocused and minimally productive. I was overwhelmed by the amount of information and number of sources available, and clueless about how to access and utilize them. Then I discovered a wonderful world of dedicated genealogists, and lags, and stevnes—and the rest is history. Like that of my ancestors, my journey came to an end: I was able to publish *Conversations Loosely Translated: A Story of Koshkonong Prairie Pioneers*, now available on Amazon.com.

You may contact me, Karen S. Swensson at [ksswen@mac.com](mailto:ksswen@mac.com).

I am also a member of four lags, representing the areas from which my ancestors emigrated: Landingslag, Numedalslågen Lag, Sognefjord Lag, Totenlag.

# Bygdelagnes Fellesraad Centennial Celebration



## Norwegian-American Bygdelagnes Fellesraad Centennial Celebration May 5-8, 2016

Many of you may remember the 1999 Centennial celebrating the organization of the first Bygdelag. It was a great occasion with 1000 attendees. It showed our allegiance to our Norwegian heritage as expressed by feelings for our “home areas” and therefore belonging to Bygdelags.

We are soon celebrating 100 years of the Bygdelagenes Fellesraad, established in 1916. At the beginning of the lags there was a concept that an umbrella organization should also be established. The first lag began in 1899 and there were attempts over several years to establish the umbrella organization, brought to fruition in 1916. Bygdelagenes Fellesraad serves as a coordinating body for all the bygdelag.

Plans for the centennial are to recognize threads of culture that remain in our society partially due to the bygdelag movement. One of them is supporting our ethnic traditions and another is encouraging Norwegian Family history. Initially the lags existed to provide fellowship for our immigrant ancestors to visit with friends, enjoy cultural activities, share ethnic foods, and visit in their own dialect. This was an invigorating time for them each summer when they met at a Stevne.

As the members grew older their offspring began to join lags, and family history became more important. Hence the emphasis changed where bygdelag became a major genealogy “help” to members and developed extensive resources and data bases. Today the bygdelag emphasize culture, fellowship, ethnic foods, folk art, music, Norway travel, and literature along with a strong emphasis on tracing family history.

The celebration begins with a reception Thursday evening welcoming participants attending Friday Seminars. There will be two seminars: *Norwegian-ness: Past, Present and Future*, which will look at our ancestor’s ability to move from one country to another and *Twenty First Century Norwegian Family History*, looking at how research tools have changed but remained the same. Both seminars will have speakers from Norway and North America and registrants may attend joint and separate presentations.

Friday evening begins the Centennial Celebration. There will be lag exhibits about their history and activities, special vendors and presentations, celebration festivities, speakers, the Fellesraad Annual Meeting, a luncheon, festive banquet, special recognitions, activities for children, demonstrations of folk dancing, displays of folk art, and other ethnic items.

Sunday offers an opportunity to visit Norway House and Mindekirken, the Norwegian Memorial Church, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Fellesraad website will feature schedules as they are updated and information for potential attendees. Also, look at Facebook by googling Fellesraad. A registration form is attached to this newsletter and available on the Fellesraad website.

Thursday and Friday activities are at the Doubletree by Hilton in Brooklyn Center. Saturday activities will be at the Earle Brown Center. Please make hotel reservations early. The registration fees are greatly reduced for lag members who register by January 15, 2016.

# Romerikslaget and Solørlag America Joint 2015 Stevne

## A Summary of Our 7th Joint Romerikslaget/Solørlag Stevne

34 members of Romerikslaget met with 52 members of Solørlag at our joint stevne held September 16-19, 2015 in LaCrosse, WI. Lag members came from Minnesota, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, South Dakota, Illinois, and Ontario, Canada. We celebrated the 25th anniversary of Romerikslaget with a cake, a program about our history by Eunice Helgeson, and entertainment by dancers from the LaCrosse Sons of Norway Wergeland Lodge. It was a wonderful party.

We began Wednesday afternoon with registration and genealogy. Shanna Kurth told about Family Search, a free search engine. Every year there are more programs available to make searches easier & Shanna understands all of them!

Thursday morning was Opening & Welcome. We sang anthems, introduced officers and new members, and Show & Tell. Several people brought items to share or told stories. A group of Romerikslaget/Solørlag members involved in the Fellesraad Centennial invited everyone to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Bygdelagenes Fellesraad in May 2016.

This was followed by "The Good Ship Hannah Paar—Its Voyage & Its Legacy" by Marvin & Louise Lang. This ship set out with Norwegian immigrants from Christiania, Norway in April of 1868, but encountered storms and ship damage requiring a long stop in Limerick, Ireland. It eventually made it to America after 107 days of struggle.

We boarded a bus for Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center where we toured the grounds and buildings from Norwegian/American immigrants' farms. The site is beautiful and the buildings appear to be waiting for their occupants to return any minute. We enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch there as well. Board meetings were held that evening, followed by the Romerikslaget 25th anniversary party.

Friday morning opened with genealogy, the Silent Auction, and vendors. Of course, we had a Hospitality Room open throughout the stevne with treats brought by attendees. It was a place to gather to satisfy our stomachs and our need to meet people. There are always delicious items to taste and coffee or beverages to keep us happy.

Marvin & Louise Lang presented, "George Sinclair, the Scottish Invasion of Norway and the Battle of Kringen". Two members accompanied the Langs to Norway to commemorate this event three years ago. This battle took place in 1612 in Gudbrandsdal, when Scottish Highlanders led by George Sinclair attacked farmers, and committed unspeakable atrocities. The Norwegians ambushed the Scots and overpowered them, killing George Sinclair.

Four new members attended the luncheon for first-time attendees and the Boards of Directors.

Member Chris Falteisek discussed his trip to Lapland and provided insight into the Sami. Photographs showed some of its breathtakingly beautiful land. Lapland includes parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. The Sami people historically were nomadic, following reindeer herds. Governments in Scandinavia have attempted to wipe out Sami culture in the past, and sadly, discrimination and abuse continues to this day.

Laurann Gilbertson from Vesterheim talked about "The History of Norwegian Sweaters". She told of sweaters in vogue throughout history, and the story of how they came to be so important to Norwegian culture.

Friday evening was the Sweater Banquet with entertainment by Rachel Storlie, a lyric soprano who studies at the U of M and has Norwegian roots. She played piano and sang songs by Grieg. Everyone enjoyed her lively program.

Saturday began with annual meetings and election of officers followed by a Memorial service. Especially noted was the loss of Priscilla Sorknes Grefsrud, a founding member of Romerikslaget who organized the first meeting in 1989. She was our first president and later served as genealogist and editor of the newsletter. She will be greatly missed. Another loss noted was that of Doug Jarvar, the husband of our current genealogist Deb Jarvar. Our hearts go out to Deb and family.

David Glomstad presented "Iron Brigade and Norwegians in the Civil War" wearing a Civil War uniform. He explained how Norwegian immigrants volunteered for service as a way to show gratitude for being part of this country.

Wayne & Elsie Olson told us about the "Eidsvoll Signers of the 1814 Constitution". Elsie's ancestor was one of the signers. She and Wayne participated in a tour for descendants of signers to Eidsvoll in 2014, 200 years after the signing.

That was followed by "LaCrosse Lumber History" by Bob Mullen of the LaCrosse Historical Society. He told us about the strong lumber industry in the area in the 19th century and its effect on the settling of the community.

The Silent Auction closed with scurrying bidders and lots of happy faces. We held the Bunad Banquet in the evening. Entertainment was by Ole & Sven, aka Phil Dybdahl and Gary Smithback. They told funny stories and sang funny songs. The stevne ended as it had begun, with lots of happy Norwegian/Americans sharing time together. Because of the Fellesraad Centennial, Romerikslaget will not be sharing a stevne with Solørlag next fall. We instead encourage members to attend the Fellesraad Centennial May 5-8, 2016, where we will hold our annual meeting. If you have questions about this, please feel free to call me at 507-640-1417 or email me at [tmgross@redred.com](mailto:tmgross@redred.com).

*Mary Gross*

# Romerikslaget and Solørlag America Joint 2015 Stevne



## Membership News

### Welcome to Our New Member

Nancy Reynolds  
4455 W 7th Winona, MN 55987  
507-454-5486 nreynold@hbei.com  
Akershus/Krachstad

### *Tell Your Genealogy Story*

*Members, whether you are new or have been with us for awhile, 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.*

## 10 Untranslatable Norwegian Terms

*by Kenneth Haug, Published on Matador Network  
and edited for space.*

### 1. Skjerp deg

This phrase does not bode well for you. It usually means you're making an idiot of yourself. Teachers use it to tell students to pay attention. I yell it at friends who are doing something ridiculous.

### 2. Kos(elig)

This is a common feature of all the Scandinavian countries to describe the feeling of warmth and friendliness that arises from sharing simple pleasures of life with people you like. Danish hygge, Swedish mys, and Norwegian kos all describe roughly the same thing.

### 3. Glad i deg

This one really makes no sense, because word for word it translates as "glad in you." You are "glad i" your close friends. Parents and spouses will also usually use "glad i deg" for text messages and similar.

### 4. Takk for sist

Takk for sist" "Thanks for the last time" is what you say to someone you haven't seen in a while. If someone says it emphatically, they probably really enjoyed your company and found it memorable. In a neutral tone of voice, it's simply polite.

### 5. Marka

Take a peek into an office in Norway anytime between November and April. See everybody staring out the window? They are longing for marka. Marka is the name of any forested areas that surround a city or town. They mostly exist for recreational purposes: people ski, bike, walk, and camp in them. Buses and (in Oslo) subway lines service them. There are massive parking lots at the entrances to these woods. Marka is civilization. Marka is life.

### 6. Faen

Yes, everyone's favorite all-purpose Norwegian swear-word. While the actual meaning of the word translates to "the devil," its usage is far broader. It can be a noun, an adjective, an adverb, or a preposition

### 7. Pålegg

Norwegians eat a lot of bread — 80 kilos of the stuff per person annually. The English language has a term for the concept — an "open sandwich," but no word for "whatever you decide to put on the bread." That is what "pålegg" is for. Salami, ham, cheese, jam, lettuce — everything you put on the bread (except the butter) is pålegg. Confusingly enough, pålegg can also mean an order of the type given by a police officer to a drunk or similar. Don't confuse these two.

### 8. Tøffelheld

Do you have that friend who always does what his wife and society wants him to do? He is a tøffelheld, or a "slipper hero."

### 9. Takk for maten

When everybody is finished eating, everybody says a phrase you have probably never heard. "Takk for maten" just means "Thanks for the food," and is a way to show gratitude to the cook for the effort she or he took to make the meal. Children in particular are expected to say this. Norwegians who say this abroad often get surprised reactions by the hosts, who assume they thought the food was really, really good.

### 10. Russ

Visit Norway during the first half of May and it seems like every teenager in the country is dressed in red overalls. This is the most visible part of "russetiden," a celebration of high school graduation that ends on May 17 — Norway's Constitution Day. High school seniors called "Russ" drink, party, and pull off pranks to let off the steam of 13 years of education.

# Romerikslaget i Amerika Membership

## Lag Officers and Directors

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

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## 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)

Name (2): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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### Dues:

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to join. Enclosed is my check.

\_\_\_\_\_ 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

*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 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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## The Scream Appears in a Freshly Sawn Plank!

"I felt as though a vast, endless scream passed through nature," wrote Norwegian painter Edvard Munch.

This week it passed through again, appearing in a freshly sawn plank.

Erling Vindfjell was sawing planks for a house he is building near Seljord, three hours west of Oslo, when he spotted the mysterious apparition.

"He was making planks on a saw and there it was," his daughter-in-law Gunn Helga Vindfjell told The Local. "He called to my husband and said 'don't throw it away!' They were both working and they were making a fire to warm themselves."

The family has since named the accidental artwork "The Scream in the Forest" and are aiming to conserve it for posterity.

"We want to keep it somewhere where no one can get hold of it. It must surely be treated as an art object," Vindfjell told Norway's VG newspaper, which first recorded her discovery.

She told The Local that she did not believe there was any cosmic significance to the find. "I'm not superstitious, so I don't think there's anything strange about it," she said. "But I expect that some people will think that."

Published in the Norwegian English e-magazine [TheLocal.no](http://TheLocal.no)