

FLAGGAN

To preserve, teach and celebrate Swedish heritage.

Spring 2020

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MISSION STATEMENT

Through its arts and educational programs and its permanent collection, the Swedish American Museum interprets the immigrant experience for children and adults and promotes an appreciation of contemporary Swedish-American culture.

FLAGGAN

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Dear Members,

This time we are putting together Flaggan as an online newsletter so we can get it to everyone a little faster. We are also trying to find ways to reduce cost during a time when the Museum is closed due to COVID-19.

Even though the Museum's doors are closed our activities have continued, and we have had a great time meeting and seeing many of you via Zoom. It is amazing what is possible with technology, and how a little creativity has opened doors to new ways of having programs and events. Going forward, we will consider adding an online component to some events to include all of our members and supporters who live further away. For now, I'm really looking forward to seeing everyone in person at the Museum as soon as it is safe for us to open our doors again.

April's calendar had a full schedule of programs and events and we moved book club and knitting group online as well as our Swedish Language classes. In addition, on Sunday, April 19 we held the Annual Meeting via Zoom, and that allowed a couple of our members in Sweden and other states to be present. It was great so see everyone that "came" to the meeting even if it was via the internet.

There are many articles here about crafts and how we can be creative in our own homes and using our own inspiration. We have knitters, sewers, bakers, painters, album creators, cooks, and more. The additional time that we all have at home has allowed us to pick a hobby or project that we didn't have time for before. Personally, I'm able to get further on my knitting projects and some sewing with more evenings at home. I'm also having fun cooking and eating dinners with Dan, have face time with our daughter Kathryn in Austin, TX and having discussions online with my sisters in Sweden. The ability to see them makes us feel together although there is physical distance between us. I hope that many of you are able to stay connected with your family and friends via phone, FaceTime, Zoom, Skype or any other way of being close.

We all hope that you feel connected to the Museum and are able to take advantage of one of the many ways we have moved from our physical location to the virtual world during this time.

Feel free to reach out via email or phone and it would be great to hear from you of how you are spending your time and if you want to share a recipe, craft, idea, or a special book to read or anything that makes the day more fun and interesting.



To Play is to Live

By Emily England

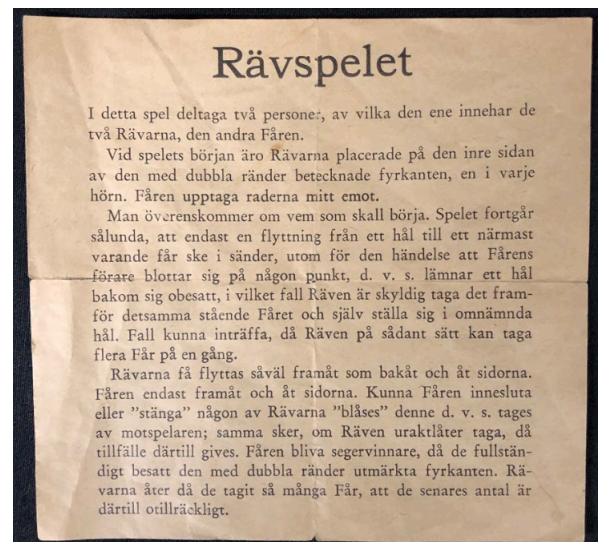
Right now, we have a temporary exhibit up called “To Play is to Live” about the life of Astrid Lindgren, the Swedish children’s book author, in honor of the 75th birthday of her most famous character, Pippi Longstocking. Sometimes it can be a little challenging to remember this maxim, “to play is to live”. What are your favorite ways to play? Read? Watch TV? Do a craft? Make art? Maybe play a board game?

Over the course of putting together this exhibit, I uncovered several similarly styled board games in our collection, all circular and with different paths to move around the board. These turned out to be a style of game called a “fox game.” In its board game iterations, two players compete, one as a fox, wolf, or other predator animal and the second as geese, sheep, or another prey animal trying to evade the predator animal long enough to meet a specific objective. For Swedes, the game is most commonly called Rävspelet. Did you know that the first fox games were most likely developed in medieval Scandinavia?

Perhaps the oldest recorded fox game is Halatafl that was mentioned in the Icelandic Grettis saga and shares similarities with tafl games, a family of ancient Nordic and Celtic strategy board games descended from Roman Empire-era strategy games. These games almost went extinct after the introduction of the ever-popular game chess (you may have heard the lawn game Kubb called “Viking chess”, but the earliest recorded mention of it is actually from the early 1900s, making it much newer and not related to fox games). Only one tafl game survives today, a Sami game called tablut. The game was continuously played by the Sami people well into the 1700s when Linnaeus recorded the rules to the best of his ability. Though Linnaeus lost a few things in translation, those rules can still be used to play a modern variant of this ancient game. Today, fox games are the most common version hailing from this epic tradition of Scandinavian strategy games.



Rävspel with rules of the game



Modern kubb game for sale in the Museum Store

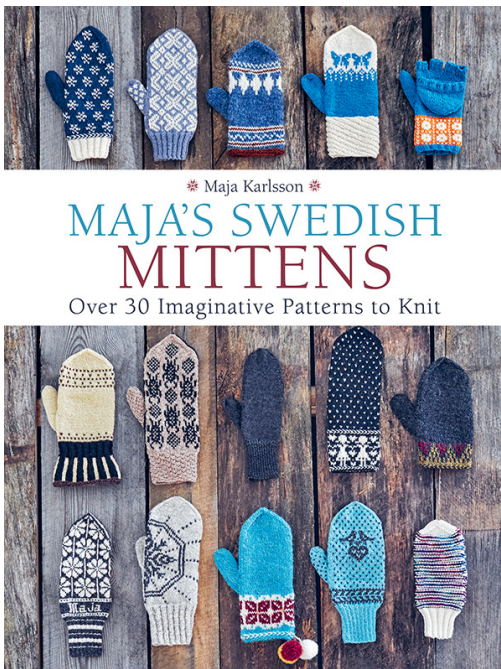
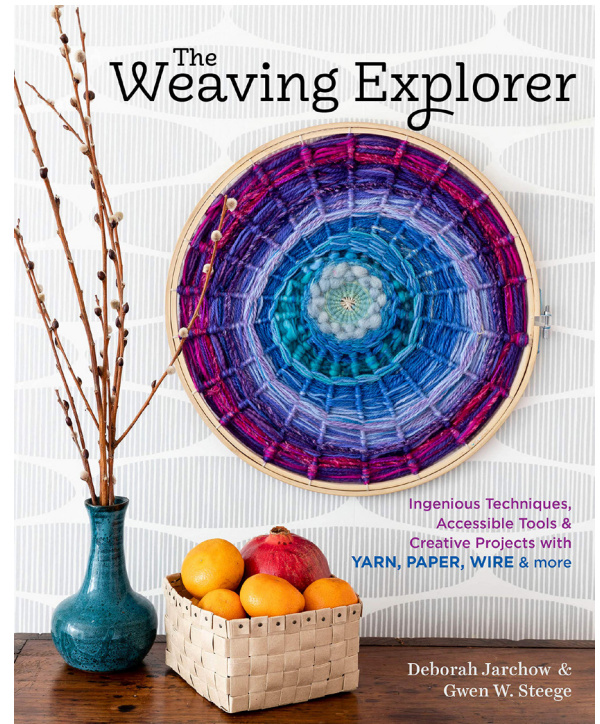


Crafting with the Kerstin Andersson Museum Store

By Catherine Selen

Handicrafts have been a big part of Swedish culture since the Viking age and beyond. Some of the most quintessential images of Scandinavian culture are rooted in their craft; think of Swedish Dala horses, or Norwegian Fair Isle sweaters. There are many ways you might connect to your ancestors and explore Scandinavian art and design through different genres of crafts.

Sweden is world renowned for their beautiful woven textiles. Many may know and love the popular Ekelund weavers, a Swedish household name that has spanned 16 generations and claims the title for the oldest textile company in the world. Weaving is a long-standing Swedish tradition born of necessity, and honored for artistry. On display in our gallery through June is an exhibit featuring beautiful works from the artist collective “9 Väware”. A lively group of 9 weavers from Västra Götland create various works of art, from apparel and accessories to wall hangings and table runners. All of the beautiful pieces on display in the gallery are available for purchase. If you're inspired to learn how to weave with or without a loom, check out the book *The Weaving Explorer* in the Museum Store.



One of the most beloved crafts in Sweden is knitting! It is so ubiquitous that most Swedes learned some form of knitting as a part of their school curriculum. We are excited to have introduced a Knitting Group to the Museum that meets monthly, welcoming those at any skill level to share their projects and discuss techniques with other like-minded people of all ages. One of our favorite knitting books in the Museum Store is *Maja's Swedish Mittens*, a collection of regional and modern patterns to keep you warm through the long winter.

Folk painting is another essential art across Scandinavia with a rich history. Popular in late 18th century rural Sweden, Kurbitsmålning or Kurbits still influences many modern designs today. Referring to the scientific Cucurbita, ornamental gourds were used both in representing bucolic traditions and as a biblical symbol of vegetal fertility. Our annual exhibit during the Holiday season featuring regional Bonader paintings from Sweden displays a perfect example of Kurbits designs used in sharing biblical stories and folktales.

Rosemåling, another technique of painting using floral embellishments and scrollwork from Norway, also originated in 18th century. Many would be surprised to learn that this technique of old became

a form of subversive art during the Nazi occupation of Norway in World War II. The floral designs allowed Norwegians to display outlawed symbols of their country and exiled King without detection by Nazi officers. Rosemåling remains a quintessential symbol of Norwegian heritage. These beautiful and unique Scandinavian works of folk art are still found on many types of antique wood furniture and home décor, even adorning some windows and doors in the Nordic countryside to this day. While many continue to create freehand designs inspired by these techniques, others may use stenciling to achieve the classic folksy patterns. Try your hand at painting your own unique Kurbits masterpiece, or relax with some colored pencils and a copy of the Scandinavian Coloring Book to add life to designs inspired by this historical craft!



scandinavian
coloring book | zeena shah



Whittling and woodwork are staples across the Nordic countries as well, from the iconic Dala Horses of Dalarna, to the cottage tradition of making “Barkbåtar”, or bark boats, to race on the water under the summer sun. It is easy to learn to make simple animals and figurines by hand, craft functional kitchen tools like butter spreaders and spoons, or to simply use your imagination to carve beautiful wooden décor for your home. All you need is a good whittling knife and a little patience! We have several books on figure carving and woodwork from all over Scandinavia. One of our newest titles, *Snitte: The Danish Art of Whittling*, shows a step-by-step guide for crafting wooden birds for beginners to more advanced whittlers.

We hope you enjoy honing your skills and exploring all of your Scandinavian hobbies, new and old. Happy crafting!

Arts and Crafts for Children: Past and Present

By Stacey Nyman

We offer a variety of programs for children and families at the Swedish American Museum. From pancake breakfasts to festivals and everything in between, there is always something fun and educational awaiting our visitors. Common components of all our programs are art and crafts. We enjoy providing a hands-on way to learn about whatever topic we are presenting, whether it is making a moon painted with flour or a Midsommar wreath made with tissue paper flowers.

At the Museum, we travel back in time when we step into the Brunk Children's Museum of Immigration. It is just natural to stop and think about what life might have been like back in the 1800s. Did children enjoy arts and crafts like today's youth do? In the 1800s, whether in Sweden or pioneer America, life was very different. For the most part, children were busy working. Children as young as 5 would start helping on the farm and around the home. When not working to help the family's livelihood, they would be doing things to simply make life easier.



Arts and crafts that we find fun and relaxing today were ways of life in the past. Children would learn the art of candle dipping in order to create light sources for their home. They would learn to spin wool into yarn in order to ensure there was a means for clothing. Yarn dyeing was another skill a child would learn. They would collect natural sources of color from things like onion skin, walnut hulls, berries and vegetables, like beets to add bright color to the yarn that would make their new clothing. They learned to knit, carve, quilt and even work with metals and clay. We tell students on our school tours, there were no stores back then. For the most part, people had to make the things they needed.



When there was time for fun, children could play with toys. Often those toys were items they made themselves, thus creating another way arts and crafts entered their daily lives. Because materials were scarce, children would need to use things they could find around their homes. Scraps of fabric or yarn or even wood would become a child's doll. Scraps of paper could be used for weaving or paper dolls. Marbles might be made out of dried clay. Wooden toys would be hand carved.

There are many times when, "I'm BORED" is uttered from a child's mouth. Crafts create a wonderfully artistic brain break, offering a creative outlet and a chance to show unique flair and ideas. Instead of diving into bins of endless supplies, or heading to Michaels or searching Amazon, it may be fun to encourage them to travel back in time. Look around the house for some odds and ends and learn an old fashioned way of doing something. They will reap all the benefits of creativity and they will learn a little about history along the way.



Please visit our website where you will find a number of resources and activities for children and families including our alphabet series.

Many of the activities posted utilize items found around the home as well as recyclable materials.

How our Volunteers get crafty and cozy!

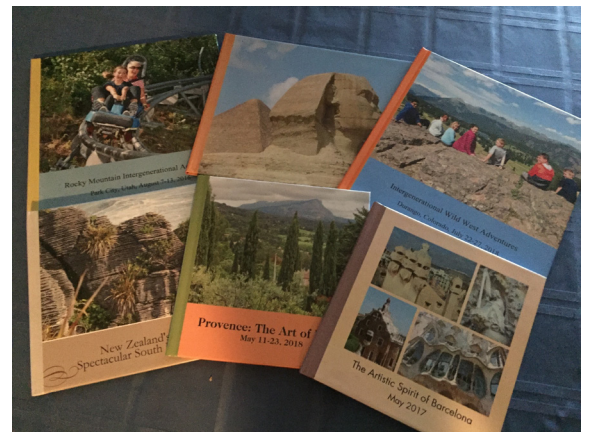
By *Caroline Gerbaulet-Vanasse*

Crafting may have started off as a necessity in Sweden, but the traditions have often been kept alive and passed down through generations as a useful and enjoyable pastime. Many of our Museum volunteers, and our members as well, enjoy different kinds of arts and crafts. Within our dedicated group of volunteers, we have knitters, seamstresses, animal lovers, musicians and more! Here we get to meet some of them.

Some of our members, who are also Museum volunteers, on crafts:

Annika Jaspers:

I don't know if you'd consider it a craft per se, but one of the things I thoroughly enjoy doing is making Shutterfly photo albums of my various trips. So far, I've made 16 albums which encompass not only my own travels (Egypt, New Zealand, Provence, the Cotswolds', Spain, Belgium, Scotland, Istanbul, etc.) but also the three intergenerational trips I've taken with my two granddaughters. I've made albums for them as well as for myself of the trips we've taken—Park City, Utah; Durango, Colorado; and, last summer, Paris. Although Shutterfly provides a variety of templates, there's still creativity involved in laying out the photos on the pages and choosing background colors and typefaces.



Lena Billgren: I'm knitting a cardigan in a knitting technique/texture I haven't practiced before which is fun and a bit challenging. Why am I knitting? Since I don't work (except for volunteering in the gift shop), I spend a lot of time on my own and knitting and crocheting makes me feel like I accomplish something compared to e.g. reading a book (but I read a lot too). I also like to do something with my hands and as well as doing something which is a bit creative. In normal times I do metal smithing 1-2 times a week at a studio in Wicker Park. My focus is making jewelry in sterling silver. When I lived in Sweden I used to work, office work in various managerial positions. The days were very busy and I had to juggle a lot of tasks and issues at the same time. As a contrast to my day to day life I sought out a hobby that was completely different. I've always liked design and jewelry and when I found a class in silver smithing and jewelry making I decided to try. And I've been doing it on and off for the last 15 years or so. I like to use my creativity for the design, and for the production I need to be calm and accurate. I need to keep my mind and focus on my project, not letting my mind run away thinking of problems at work or at home. I need to be fully present and not rushing into my project. I need to saw straight, file straight, not melting my metal when soldering and so on. It's actually quite meditative. And as a result of all my work I end up with a ring, a bracelet, earrings or something that I can wear proudly or give to a friend as a gift.



Margot Ward:

The only craft I have worked on lately is sewing for “Dress a Girl around the world.”

I do love working with colorful materials, and always add a little stuffed animal in the pocket and then try to imagine a little girl being happy to receive it.

Carol Erickson: I’m a new knitter, just one year but finding so much pleasure in the process. You can bring your knitting where ever you go. I’ve admired from afar what others make and thought I couldn’t do it. My friend who is a wonderful teacher took a look at me and said “Carol, you are telling your brain you can’t do it, your brain doesn’t know that” I thought, she is right! I have connected to other knitters and learn from them. I like to give away what I knit to bring joy to others, which in turn brings joy to me.



Our volunteers on getting cozy:

Jill Crooker: Take a walk each day, read a lot, listen to my CD’s (Jaerv), rest and watch old movies. Cooking and cleaning and drinking my Swedish Coffee!!!!

Sue Nordstrom: Keeps cozy by playing and training her Golden Retrievers “Scout” and “Gibbs.” She also enjoys “connecting with family and friends on the telephone and checking on senior family members.”

Diana Gardner: Every morning I do yoga exercises which keeps me calm and relaxed. And now in these stay-at-home times I still like to get out and walk to the lake and small beaches. That also gives me peace of mind. I think it is important to do relaxing things for our peace of mind and bodies. Also I have some very soothing music I play often, suggested by my son.

Jerome Stemnock: Some people knit sweaters, and others paint pictures. The results of their skills and labors last for years and bring joy. Some of us don’t have those skills, but we can still cook. Hours of work are devoured in minutes, but the satisfaction of being the maker of the feast lasts. Cooking is an everyday activity, but it somehow feels different in these times of lockdown. There is more satisfaction these days in presenting your loved ones (and yourself) with a fresh loaf of bread or a steaming bowl of soup. And the fact that some ingredients are harder to get these days means that you can be a little more creative than you might otherwise be. Michelangelo looked at a piece of marble and saw David. That’s beyond the power of most of us, but we can still look at a semi-depleted pantry and see a tasty supper.

How the Museum Staff Crafts



Karin Moen Abercrombie

Executive Director

I learned to knit when I was in first or second grade and have continued with knitting and also some crocheting in between. My interest in sewing started in middle school and thanks to my dad building a transformer I was able to bring my Bernina sewing machine to the U.S. For many years it was a great financial help to make my own clothes and then make clothes for Kathryn when she was young. Now it is more for special craft projects, like making masks, or other useful projects. The clothes making is on the back burner at the moment.

Elise Beck

Marketing Assistant

My favorite craft is making framed collages. I keep interesting postcards, stickers, coasters, and advertisements I encounter and then find cool frames to arrange them in. I started this when I needed cheap wall art in college. Now I do it because it's a fun way to journal where I've gone!



Catherine Selen

Store Manager

Since I was young, I've always been a crafty person. My mom is a painter, and I spent a lot of time in her studio as a kid playing with art supplies, diving into everything from watercolor to collage and beyond. I was especially fond of making miniature foods and toys out of polymer clay for our dollhouses (and the fairies that lived in them!) As an adult, this love for little things has translated into making clay charms for friends, and a fondness for watching Tiny Kitchen videos on YouTube.

I also have a great love for knitting. A family friend taught me one summer while we were all staying in a cottage together. I will never forget it; I spent the whole week making my first scarf with a pair of circular needles. It remains one of my favorite crafts to enjoy while I sit back and relax with a cup of tea.



Emily England

Curator

Knitting is my longest-enduring favorite craft, but I have a very crafty family who have taught me a little bit of almost everything. Halloween is my favorite holiday of the year because I love making my own costumes and I don't often have the excuse to bust out some of my more eclectic craft skills, like papier-mâché. Right now though, I'm learning how to knit socks. I just finished my first ever pair in January and immediately started my second pair!

Angelica Farzaneh-Far

Communications Manager

Not sure it qualifies as a craft, but I love baking. I mostly bake sweet things with the occasional bread. When my children were younger I tried to create healthy alternatives to cereal bars and cookies as well as hiding vegetables in cakes and muffins. It is particularly exciting when one of my new inventions come out better than the original and becomes one my family's new staples.



Caroline Gerbaulet-Vanasse

Member & Community Engagement Manager

Throughout my life I have engaged in a variety of crafts from ceramics to quilting. One craft I completed recently that I am particularly proud of involves origami. For my mother's birthday a couple of years ago I decided to make her a bouquet of flowers made out of origami. Using a variety of different origami sheets I made a bunch of origami tulips and lilies. It was hard work, but the result was nice enough to earn it a permanent display in my parents' home.

Stacey Nyman

Education Manager

Almost 10 years ago I taught myself how to knit by watching YouTube videos. I'd still consider myself an advanced beginner just because I don't practice as much as I should, but I enjoy it immensely! I also really like to draw and paint. My favorite thing to do is probably crafting with kids! I thoroughly enjoy creating the samples for all our programs at the Museum. It gives me an excuse to be a kid once again!



Knitting Group at the Museum

By Kristin Bergquist

There is a knitting group at the Swedish American Museum. We meet on the last Sunday of every month. EVERYONE IS WELCOME! The group consists of beginners, established, and expert knitters or crocheters. Knitters and crocheters love the feel of yarn itself as well as the finished projects. They knit their stories and feelings into their accomplishments. Most knitters find knitting relaxing and peaceful. It is a moment for yourself and can be an escape. In the group we help each other with everything from a dropped stitch to learning something new. We assist each other in what yarn is most suitable for what pattern or project as well as giving advice on where to find yarn locally or online. Patterns and books are shared. Conversations flow easily in the group, not only about knitting but everyday topics as well. We share our successes as well as our failures. Knitting is one of the few hobbies that you can do almost everywhere.



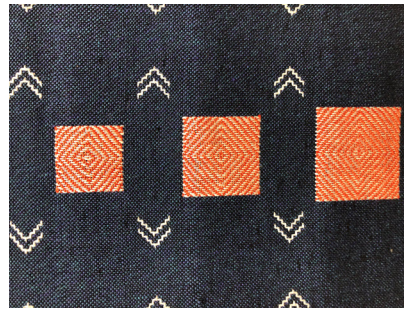
More on Knitting

By Elise Beck

The past decade has seen a grand re-emergence of DIY (do-it-yourself) crafts. Platforms such as Etsy and Pinterest show that we are not only spending more time making handcrafted products, but also that we are purchasing them at an increasing rate. With the ever-improving and cost-efficient production lines of large manufacturers, handmade products are often pricier and less consistently available. So, why would a desire for this market increase? Why spend hours creating a sweater that is easily available nearby? Perhaps the heavy incorporation of technology into work life leaves us feeling detached from our work, and a return to physical production aids in filling that gap. Perhaps we desire a stronger connection with our possessions. While the reasoning could be debated, it is undeniable that we're experiencing a new wave of crafting.

At the Swedish American Museum's monthly knitting group, a mix of men and women of all ages gather to discuss their on-going projects. When posed the question, "Why do you knit?" the responses focused on the emotional aspects of the craft, rather than its practicality. Seraphim (let's double check her name I think it is Seraphine), a member of the group, explained, "[Knitting] makes me feel like I'm accomplishing something." What started as necessary trades of the past (carpentry, sewing, baking) has been transformed into a practice of self-discovery, self-discipline, and self-growth. It's a way to step back from the bustle of our lives and focus on the peaceful repetition of creating something that is truly ours.

If you'd like to join our Knitting Group, go to the Museum website calendar for information on how to join us via Zoom.



Preserving a Cultural Heritage

By *Angelica Farzaneh-Far*

Double-weave is a special weaving technique that creates textiles with two layers. Early double-weave in Sweden was primarily used as a status symbol. It was commonly used as an art form, often depicting Christian motifs, or made into blankets, bride rugs, or baptismal robes for the wealthy. By the 1900s, the craft was very popular. Books were printed with patterns and instructions, courses were arranged, and textile art was displayed in public spaces. This popularity lasted for almost a century before it suddenly stopped. Books went out-of-print and classes were almost impossible to come by. The art form was considered difficult and boring, and as double-weaving became less popular, fewer people knew how to do it.

This spring, the Museum is the home to a double weaving exhibit, called “Double-Weave in Sweden - New Materials and Applications”. This exhibit is put together by nine weavers from Sweden. Their aim is to preserve this cultural heritage and teach people about its history and techniques. The weavers hope that by finding new uses, materials, and applications for double-weave, they will increase awareness around this weaving form and renew interest in the craft. For those who were lucky enough to visit the Museum while three of the weavers were in Chicago, they were able to watch the women in action. They excitedly shared their knowledge and skills with anyone who was interested. Although we are closed, luckily today we have technology. To give you a chance to see the weavings and enjoy the exhibit online. Visit www.SwedishAmericanMuseum.org to go on a virtual tour of “Double-weave in Sweden, new materials and applications” until we open up once again and you can enjoy the creations in person.



Genealogy Through Quilting

by Debra Lindahl

Back in 1967 when I was but a flicka of twelve years of age, my uncle, Harold Nelson, sat down with my 76-year-old grandmother and had “talks” with her about her life as the daughter of Swedish immigrants. These talks turned into a written memoir called “The Life and Times of Mother Nelson.”

First, a bit about my Grandmother: Mabel Olivia Vann (Wann) was born in Kansas on December 21, 1891 to Charlie and Alida Vann. She was one of nine children and the eldest daughter. Grandma wrote that she was in charge of fixing the hair of her five younger sisters, about her education through eighth grade, and the Swedish language spoken at home and at church. She wrote about her first jobs as a Mother’s Helper to neighbors and as an overnight watcher of the newly deceased body resting in the parlor.



She wrote about how she survived a tornado in Marquette, Kansas in 1905 when twenty-seven others weren’t so fortunate. She wrote about meeting my Grandfather, Albert H. Nelson, when she was a young woman and their love story...even the wild ride on Dolly, the horse, to Lindsborg, Kansas to pick up her wedding veil.

On December 23, 1914, my grandparents were married in Marquette, Kansas and she writes, “It was cold and there was snow on the ground. Dad’s folks came in two vehicles, namely a car and a sleigh. We had no wedding attendants. We served a lap dinner, not a lunch as is customary these days. We didn’t have a honeymoon, we went to Dad’s folks for a day or so.” Eventually, my grandparents had seven children: LaVern, Merlyn, Lynette, Elom (my Dad), Les, Ken and Harold. In 1934, their only daughter died at age 14. In 1941, Grandpa died leaving Grandma as a widow with six sons. Five of those six sons were enlisted men during WWII; they all returned home which was certainly an answer to all those prayers by their faithful mother!

In 2010, I became a grandmother myself. At a young age, Ellie started requesting me to tell her stories about when I was a little girl, as well as when my daughter - her mother - was a little girl. An idea was born that I should write a sort of memoir about this side of the family with stories of Ellie’s great-grandparents, her grandparents, and her parents. I decided to write 100 stories due to the inspiration provided by one of my favorite children’s books, *THE HUNDRED DRESSES* by Eleanor Estes (1944). A side note: this is the story of an immigrant girl, Wanda Petronski, who comes to America from Poland and doesn’t speak the language and wears the same dress to school each day. I could relate her story to that of my own Swedish ancestors.

Because I am a quilter, I would make a quilt with 100 blocks in the quilt; each block would feature a little dress shape. I would use fabrics from the clothes of my mother and other loved ones to construct 100 blocks of different dresses using these fabrics. Each block would represent one story. Obviously, I didn't have the clothes of my grandmothers, so I used "representational" fabrics such as the reddish color of lingonberry jam to tell about our family's tradition of Swedish pancakes - with the recipe included in the companion memoir book I wrote. For the story of my father, I used fabric printed with stars to represent his service to our country.

For my marriage story, I used peach and brown fabrics because those were the colors our wedding party wore. At first, coming up with 100 family stories to tell seemed like a real challenge, but by the completion of the project, I had many more stories that came to mind and wished to continue writing them down! Each little dress block contained 27 pieces - or more. The quilt took me four years to complete.

Quite by surprise, I have found myself taking this quilt "on the road" to tell the stories of Mabel, Ethel, Vera and Elom, Elder and Muriel, my siblings, my children Anne and John, and my six grandchildren - Ellie, Maja, Kaden, Carter, Harper and Anders.



My message is to tell your stories, just as my grandmother did in her memoir from 1967. There is no time like the present to tell these stories and no present as lovely as past times remembered for those who carry the torch for future generations to illuminate lives that mattered. Maybe you are not a quilter; find your own way to pass these stories along!

Vasaloppet

By Maryann Lindgren McDaniel

A cherished Swedish tradition is Vasaloppet, the oldest and biggest cross country ski race, which is rich in history. During Gustav Eriksson's flight from the Danish king, he stopped in Sälen and returned to Mora to lead the uprising against Danish occupation forces. Gustav was later elected King of a free Sweden in 1523 and is now a symbol for the world's largest ski competition held annually in Sweden, the thrilling 90 km Vasaloppet. Nearly 100,000 participants annually tackle different parts (if not all) of the classic stretch from Sälen to Mora.



If you, like me, wish to accept the challenge of the Vasaloppet, but a winter trip to Sweden is not possible, a wonderful alternative exists in Mora Minnesota, sister city to Mora Sweden. Mora, MN lies about 70 miles north of Minneapolis and hosts its own version, Vasaloppet USA. This charming town plans all year for this event, including grooming their 18km of ski trails on a beautiful course complete with hills and lakes, coordinating 4 different races of various lengths, hosting over 1200 participants on the second Saturday in February. The celebration continues on Sunday with skjoring (skiing with your dog), fat tire bike races and yes, spark races (kick sled). You will not find a more festive and competitive weekend in Minnesota. The community spirit and hard work is evident to all participants and spectators.

My great grandfather, Gustav Lindgren, brought his wife, 3 sons and 2 daughters to Minnesota in 1906 with many other Swedes at that time. I have been lucky enough to visit Sweden, tracing my roots back to the small village of Hede in the middle of the country and see the home where my grandfather was born. The courage of those people to attempt a very difficult journey with an unknown outcome has always fascinated me. So, of course I had to tackle Vasaloppet USA! I actually like winter and the sports opportunities that it brings.



After a quick flight to Minneapolis, and being met by my Aunt and Uncle, we traveled the 70 miles to Mora. Friday is "practice day" when you have a chance to test out the course in Mora before they close it at 4 p.m. for final grooming. You can begin your practice run at the gorgeous Nordic Center, complete with

waxing room, small kitchen, bathrooms and 2 saunas. The Nordic Center is completely run by volunteers, open free of charge to skiers and closely resembles the beautiful red buildings found all over Sweden.

Saturday is race day. All races finish downtown Mora on Union Street, upon which a foot of snow has been shoveled BACK ON the road so skiers can finish, and wreaths put around the necks of the winners by the “Kransflickor.” My race started on



beautiful, frozen Lake Mora. The national anthem is played, the sky is as blue as a Minnesota sky can be, and the air is invigorating cold. If you do not feel cold at the beginning of a XC ski race, you are in trouble. The effort required to glide along the frozen trail quickly warms you up in a big way! At the end of Lake Mora is a traditional Swedish Bell tower that rings throughout the day. At the other end of the town is a huge Dala horse, looming 2 stories tall.

The Vasaloppet US races vary in length from 54km to 13 km and can be done Skating style or the Classic touring style. Since I live in Chicago, and really don't have much opportunity to train, I opted for the shortest race. It is still a challenging 8 miles, flat terrain with quite a few hills to pay attention to. After 8 miles, taking me about 1 ½ hours, I was very glad to hear that bell

chiming, I was near the finish line! The sense of accomplishment that comes with finishing a race such as this is priceless, especially since I beat my prior years' time by 9 minutes! My name and hometown were announced as I crossed under the arch in downtown Mora. I won't share my age group with you, but will tell you that I saw more than one competitor in the 80+ age group. Wow, those Swedes are tough!



Vasaloppet USA frequently attracts skiers from Sweden and the town opens up their homes to the visitors. For me to connect with our Swedish friends in this beautiful sister city to Mora Sweden is hard to describe. I plan on participating in this great event for many years to come, so if you would like to join me or have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me (maryann@src.us.com).

Intern Highlight



My name is Jackson Gage, and I will be working as a curatorial intern at the Swedish American Museum through the spring of 2020. I graduated in May of 2019 from Earlham College with a B.A. in History, and I am currently pursuing a career in the museum field. I was born and raised in Albany Park, and can remember coming to the Brunk Children's Museum several times as a small child. The Swedish American Museum's emphasis on local history has already given me the opportunity to reexamine landmarks and other features of the landscape close to my home that I had previously either ignored or never noticed.

Most of my work so far has been behind the scenes – updating the collections database, photographing artifacts, building new archival storage trays – but I have also been putting together a series of social media posts based around objects in the

Museum's permanent collection that are not on display. These will give members of the general public the chance to take a look behind the curtain and get an insider's perspective on a number of objects the Museum keeps in archival storage – each with its own fascinating story. The project is still in its preliminary stages, but keep a close eye on the Museum's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram feeds for further updates.



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Upcoming online activities

While the stay-at-home order is still in progress the Museum is offering a number of online activities. Please visit the website calendar to get the codes for joining in via Zoom.

Programs

Learn to use Zoom

Monday, April 27, 2 p.m.

A lot of Museum events have moved to Zoom. Want to learn how to better use the program? Mary Allsopp is here to teach you how to get the most out of the program.

Scandinavian Jam

Sunday, May 3 & 17, 1 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Scandinavian Jam has moved to Zoom too.

Hejsan!

Friday, May 15

Hejsan craft and story time has moved online. The months story and activity can be found on our website starting on this day.

Book Club

Saturday, May 23, 1 p.m.

The book for May is "The Red Address Book" by Sofia Lundgren. You can get your copy in the Museum Store.

Knitting Group

Sunday, May 31, 1 p.m.

All levels are welcome to join in to share skills and tips.

Recurring Events

Swedish TV Series

Thursday 1 p.m.

April 30

May 7, 14, 21 & 28

Watch an episode of "Bonus familjen" (available on Netflix) and then join us for a discussion online.

Swedish Fika

Friday 2 p.m.

May 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29

Bring your fika and join us discussing recipes or just having a nice time together.

Game Night

Friday 7 p.m.

May 1, 15 & 29

Join the Museum for trivia night.

Practicing Swedish

Saturday 11 a.m.

May 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30

Learning Swedish and just want to practice talking?

Join us on Saturday mornings.

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