



Norse Valley Lodge 5-491 Nytt Notes May 2025

Springtime in Norway

With yesterday's cool rain drenching Northeastern Wisconsin, the grass is turning greener, flowers will be blooming within the next two weeks, birds are chirping, and temperatures will be rising this weekend. Spring is in full swing! And with that, people are ready to emerge from winter's cold and darkness to take advantage of the beautiful outdoors.

Although many think of spring as the gateway to summer, spring in Norway is treated as a special time with its own uniqueness and exciting offerings. Norwegians are not afraid of the cold, so when "cold" turns into "less cold," they are outside, even before the frost melts.

A unique Norwegian tradition that invites many Norwegians outside is "utepils." "*Ute*" means "outside" and "*pils*" is a pilsner, a type of pale lager beer. Although the translation seems self-explanatory, it has a deeper meaning that highlights Norwegian's love for the outdoors. "It's a celebration of the changing seasons and the beauty of nature."



Springtime in Norway is also a great time to explore the fjords. The landscape awakens and the melting snow creates waterfalls that cascade down the mountainside into the fjord. A boat tour through Geirangerfjord is one activity that is particularly stunning this time of year.

Vårskitur (spring skiing) is another activity that is quite common during the Norwegian spring. The days are warmer and sunnier—some even say you need to wear sunscreen and sunglasses to protect from sunbeams that reflect off the snow. A ski resort in the north, Narvikfjellet, is known for the ability to ski from the top of the mountain all the way down to the fjord – oftentimes until June!

There are so many good things that spring brings about in Norway. In fact, they even have a word for

the cheer it brings – *vårfølelse*— which means "spring feeling." It encompasses the feeling of hope you get at the sign of new life in nature or the warm sunlight on your skin. Spring feeling triggers serotonin and dopamine – the "happy hormones"—and who couldn't use more happiness in their life? So, take a moment this spring to breathe in the fresh, crisp air and enjoy spring for all of its one-of-a-kind offerings.

In case you missed it....

Thanks to Lois Gruetzmacher who presented last Saturday's Lodge program about the Viking replica ship, the Hjemkomst, which is housed in Moorhead, Minnesota.

The ship is a full-scale replica of the Gokstad Viking ship that was discovered in Norway way back in 1880.

The idea for building *Hjemkomst* was that of Robert Asp (1923–1980), a guidance counselor at Moorhead Junior High School. Construction on *Hjemkomst* began in 1974. It was put into the waters of Lake Superior at Duluth, Minnesota in 1980 to see if it was seaworthy. Asp died on December 27th, 1980 of Leukemia.

In May 1982, Asp's three sons and daughter along with eight other members of the *Hjemkomst* crew decided to sail the *Hjemkomst* to Norway, which was Asp's original dream.



The ship departed Duluth on May 11th, 1982, and arrived in New York City on June 8th, then arrived in Bergen, Norway, on July 19th, and on August 9th, arrived in Oslo. The ship stayed in Oslo for a year until it was transported back to its present location at the Moorhead museum.

Thanks again Lois for educating us on this ship's fantastic story.

This topic tied in nicely with the upcoming 200th anniversary of the first Immigrants from Norway to set sail for the new Country of the United States of America.

This autumn in Norway, Illinois from October 3rd to 5th there will be a three-day weekend of Norwegian culture fun. Events include Sloop and Fox Valley, Illinois settlement pioneer history, traditional Norwegian culture and craft programs and classes, Norwegian games and movie night, a "Sluppen" fun walk, a Norwegian barn dance with Norwegian folk music and food, traditional Norwegian worship service, and a chance to meet descendants of the first Norwegian-American immigrants at their Sloop Society annual meeting.

If interested, weekend registration is required by September 1st. Here is the registration link:

<https://sonsofnorway5.com/library/original/docman/REGISTRATION-2025-03-18CELEBRATINGNORWEGIANIMMIGRATIONandSLOOPER200thRevised.pdf>

Upcoming Lodge Events!

Saturday May 17th Brat and Burger Fundraiser at Festival Foods in Kimberly.

We are looking to build on the success we had last summer with our Festival Foods brat stand fundraiser by doing 2 this summer!

Our first opportunity is Saturday May 17th at the Festival Foods in Kimberly (800 E. Maes Ave, Kimberly - former Kimberly Shopko location).

To make this a success we need your help. We need the following number of people for each shift.

8:00 AM - 11:00 AM Set-up: 2 people to help set up and fill orders for any early birds.

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM Lunch: 4 people to fill orders, act as cashier and be a runner.

2:00 PM - 5:00 PM Post Lunch & Shut down: 2 people to fill orders and help with shut down/clean-up

Treasurer Corey Olson will be the lead for these events and be the grill master throughout the day.

Please check your calendars and sign up by reaching out directly to Corey via e-mail clobadger87@gmail.com.

Mark your calendars for our second opportunity on Saturday August 2nd at the Appleton Northland Avenue Festival Foods.

Thanks in advance for helping out your Lodge!

Sunday May 18th at 11:30 a.m.: Syttende Mai Lodge Picnic at Derks Park in Appleton.

Ice cream, Hot dogs in Lefse, and Lawn games! And you don't have to boat across the pond to Norway!

Attendees are encouraged to provide a side dish that they can share along with their own preferred drinks.



Upcoming Volunteer Opportunity:

Beginning at 11:30 a.m. and ending at 2:15 p.m. on Wednesday May 28th, we are looking for Norse Valley members to volunteer at Feeding America on the north side of Appleton to pack food for the less fortunate. Please contact Norse Valley member Linda Hash (lhash@new.rr.com), our volunteer coordinator, if you would like to help out.

Meet Norse Valley member LeAnn Ostrem Knoeck!

In an effort to get to know our fellow local Lodge members, I interviewed LeAnn in the last month and she graciously accepted my invitation and allowed me to share her story...

Do you have a Board position with Norse Valley and what are your duties?

I serve on the board as the "Greeter" at the "mostly" monthly meetings. I think it's important to welcome old and new to our meetings.

Talk me about your childhood.

I was born in Viroqua but lived most of my life in Columbus (my parents grew up on farms near Westby). I remember visiting my grandma for the holidays. She would also stay with us for a week or two in the summer. She spoke Norwegian to anyone who understood - I wish I had learned some from her! She made the best Norwegian desserts and meals (more I wish I had learned from her!). I did learn to roll lefse from my aunt, but the rest I'm hoping to learn from other Sons of Norway members.

How long have you been connected with the Sons of Norway?

I have been a member for just a couple of years. I first found the Sons of Norway when I saw a Facebook post about the Lutefisk dinner. I didn't realize there were so many of us in the Fox Valley area!

Talk about your Norwegian heritage.

My mother's side (Larson/Nelson) has been traced back to Gudbrandsdalen near Biri. My dad's family farm (Østrem) was near Moi in the Lund district (about 6 miles north).



What are your interests?

I enjoy learning new things and traveling. I read a lot and play the piano (for fun). My newest interest is my new granddaughter (only grandchild), Henley, who lives on St Thomas, US Virgin Islands. That's where the plane takes me now!

Please tell me about your travel plans to the Nordic countries.

My husband and I are traveling to Norway via a brief layover in Iceland this May. I've been doing a lot of reading and can't wait! We will be going through both areas where my great grandparents lived.

Nordic Landmarks in North America

Learning about your Nordic heritage doesn't require a trip to Norway. There are plenty of opportunities for North Americans to have those cultural experiences closer to home. Here are some museums, monuments, historical sites and educational centers in the United States and Canada worthy of a family road trip.

Runestone Museum in Alexandria, MN.

This museum is home to the famed Kensington Runestone, an intriguing artifact discovered in 1898, clutched in the roots of an aspen tree on the Olof Öhman farm near Kensington, MN. Check out a 40-foot-long replica Viking trading ship called "Snorri," and see country's largest Viking, Big Ole, which stands 28-feet tall. Learn how Norwegians lived throughout history by touring a replica Viking home and a 1800s log cabin, which was inhabited by a Norwegian immigrant family.

Toftezen Monument in Stanwood, WA.

Erected as a tribute to the first Norwegian settler in Washington State, Zakarias Martin Toftezen, his body was in an abandoned cemetery in Oak Harbor, then moved to Stanwood, one of the largest Scandinavian populations in the state. The Stillaguamish Valley Pioneer Museum and the Sons of Norway sponsored the monument, and King Olav dedicated the memorial in 1939.

Livsreise—Norwegian Heritage Center in Stoughton, WI



Most of us in Northeastern Wisconsin are familiar with the nearby Scandinavian landmark. The name "livsreise" translates to "life's journey," which fits this center dedicated to Norwegian heritage. This center features special exhibits, emigrant storybooks and an auditorium with presentations focusing on Norwegian culture, history and much more. Visitors can also begin the journey of discovering their own Norwegian roots, as the genealogy center was opened in conjunction with the Norwegian American Genealogical Center and Naeseth Library in Madison. Here, visitors have access to

online databases to view records and census data.

Rollo Statue in Fargo, ND

Fargo is home to one of three bronze statue replicas of Rollo the Viking leader (the others reside in Rouen, France, and Ålesund, Norway). Fargo acquired the statue in 1912 when word got out that one of the statues would be sent to the United States where the highest percentage of Norwegian settlers resided. The bronze statue originally stood by the Great Northern Railway Depot, and now stands near the entrance to the Sons of Norway Kringen lodge.

Norway Pavilion in Epcot's World Showcase, Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, FL

As one of the original 11 countries that Disney brought to life at the Epcot as part of the World Showcase, the Norway pavilion has been a favorite for decades. Walt Disney World celebrates Norwegian culture with a replica Stave Church containing Viking artifacts, traditional folk art, which served as inspiration for the blockbuster film "Frozen" and a new attraction featuring characters from the film. At the Akershus Royal Banquet Hall in the World Showcase, visitors can enjoy "Taste of Norway," featuring traditional cuisine, such as pan-seared salmon, and *kjøttkake* (a Norwegian meatball dish).

Promise of America Monument in Lake Mills, IA

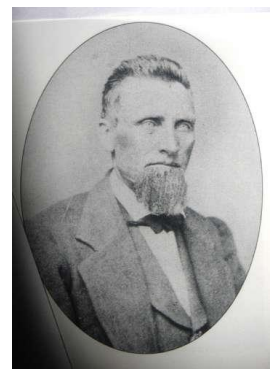
Located in Iowa's prairie land on the east edge of Lake Mills is a sculpture depicting a Norwegian immigrant family in the 1860s. This particular sculpture celebrates those immigrants who settled in the prairies of the upper Midwest in the 1800's. The sculpture can be viewed year round from daylight to dusk.



The Legend of Norwegian Immigrant Snowshoe Thompson: Mailman of the Sierras

Good Luck Snowshoe Thompson!" was the cry as John A. Thompson left Placerville, California on that cold winter day in 1856 on homemade snowshoes (skis as we call them today). True to the American West, no person of notoriety lasted very long without having a nickname bestowed upon them. So it was upon this day, the man who would save the Town of Genoa 75 miles east in Nevada, was so christened.

Jon Torsteinson-Rue was born in Tinn, Telemark, Norway on a mountainside farm on April 20th of 1827. At the age of 10, he left his homeland with his mother Gro and sailed for America. Later John A. Thompson, as he was now known, longed for the tall pines that reminded him of his birthplace. At age 22, he eventually followed the California Gold Rush of 1849 and settled at Putah Creek, near Placerville, California. When his attempts at gold mining failed, he settled into farming and did what came naturally to him. But in the early winter of 1856, when the small town of Genoa located at the base of the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, was isolated by the worst winter snows yet seen, the local newspaper featured an ad imploring anyone who had the ability to apply themselves to delivering mail and articles to this tiny Carson Valley community.



In the 20 years that he carried these articles which sometimes weighed as much as 100 pounds in the pack upon his back twice a month during the winter, he experienced several adventures that would challenge the heartiest of men. He rescued no less than 3 men on two separate occasions, trapped by winter conditions and who had given up all hope of seeing their loved ones again. From his home in California, across the Sierra Nevada, he would ski to Genoa, Nevada again and again.

Taking three days to reach the Town of Genoa from Placerville and only two days upon return, he was never lost while often traveling at night. Once he encountered a pack of wolves and had no recourse but to ski close by them. His worries were subdued as he whooshed past them without any pursuit on their part. "Snowshoe" also helped to carry the typeface and parts for the printing press of the Territorial Enterprise, the first printed newspaper in Nevada. He moved the items to Genoa in 1858, to Carson City in 1859 and then finally to Virginia City in 1860 where the newspaper grew to fame with Mark Twain as one of its most celebrated reporters.

Thompson was a man of his community. He eventually purchased land in Diamond Valley, California at the south end of Carson Valley, Nevada. He helped to design and install many of the irrigation systems throughout the adjoining valleys which are still in use today. He married Genoa resident Agnes Singleton in 1866 and together they had one child, a son Arthur, who was born in 1867 and passed away at the age of 11 in 1878 of diphtheria.

John A. Thompson is reported to have successfully worked a gold mine somewhere above Carson Valley which remains lost to this day. He was involved in the local Genoa community and was even the first person to sign up with the Genoa Rangers during the Pyramid Lake Paiute Uprising of 1860 which ended with more than 75 Rangers dead, Thompson being one of the few survivors.

Ironically Snowshoe Thompson was never paid by the U.S. Government for carrying the government mail. While he was paid privately by individuals, he never formally signed a government contract. In the early winter of 1872 he traveled to Washington D.C. to plead his case with a sum of what he felt he was owed. The U.S. Government declined to pay him compensation and he returned to his Diamond Valley ranch disappointed.

On a mid-May afternoon in 1876 after feeling unwell while working his ranch, Thompson retired to his bed to take a rest before his dinnertime meal. He never left his bed again, passing away a few days later on May 17th from the effects of what was later understood to be appendicitis. His many contributions and his standing in his community led to a grand funeral which was held at the County Courthouse in Genoa on May 19th. He was laid to rest one-half mile north of town in what is now the Genoa Cemetery.

In 1960 the Norwegian Olympic Ski team visited his grave, laying upon it a wreath of recognition. Today Snowshoe Thompson is honored from Placerville to Genoa and beyond, as a pioneer, innovator and beloved citizen of these communities.



Attention Facebook Users

Be sure to Follow our lodge's Facebook page (@norsevalley) and check in regularly to Like and Share our posts if you happen to miss them in your feed.

The more our posts are Shared and Liked, the more exposure our lodge gets which is great advertising for us. Don't forget that our website norsevalley.org is a great place to find out about upcoming events and check out photos from past events.

Got a question? Send an email to norsevalley@gmail.com.

If you have any questions or concerns about lodge activities, please contact Judy Ghastin at judy62ghastin@gmail.com or 920-450-3584.