

NORDIC AMERICAN PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET

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DID YOU KNOW?

That this issue of the Newsletter is being mailed to 78 members and friends of the Psalmodikon Forbundet that live in 16 states plus Sweden and Canada? From Maine, New Jersey and Maryland on the East Coast to Washington and Oregon on the West Coast. Minnesota has the most with 42 and Iowa second with 9. Please check your label and note the date - if it reads 1999, you are current with your dues - if it reads 1998 its not too late to send in your \$5.00 for this year's dues to continue receiving the Newsletter for this year!

Larry Gjenvick

Notes from MUSIC-ON-A-STRING

The coldest days of Winter are now behind us along with all the birthdays of famous presidents and so forth.

The long dark days of Winter always give me time for rest and renewal and I got to thinking that there should be a holiday set aside to honor the **PSALMODIKON** *WHOSE BIRTH DATE IS* **JUNE 15, 1835!**

For it was on that date that Lars Roverud of Norway received the authorization from the Royal Resolution in Norway, allowing the Psalmodikon, as an acceptable musical instrument, to be played in church and to improve the choral singing.

From then on, the use of the Psalmodikon became very popular. Hymn books were written in the Sifferskrift (numerical) method and the Psalmodikon became well known throughout Sweden and Norway. Rev. Johannes Dillner was ordained in the Ostervalla Parish of Sweden in 1839. He was very influential amongst his parishioners in encouraging everyone to make these simple little instruments and learn to play them. At one time there were over 10,000 Psalmodikons in this area and many of them are still in existence today. The popularity of the Psalmodikon contin-

ued to increase and soon many were being played in the homes and schools throughout Norway and Sweden as well.

When the first wave of immigrants began, many of them brought these favorite little instruments with them or they made them after they arrived in America. They continued to use the Psalmodikons in their homes, schools and churches. The Psalmodikon was a very popular instrument used by the traveling preachers. In the early beginning there were no churches and the church services were held in the homes. The Psalmodikon certainly continued to be useful in this manner also.

The Psalmodikons were popular for about 100 years in total. Today the Psalmodikon is nearly a forgotten part of our Scandinavian heritage. Perhaps, because of its limitations, the Psalmodikon could not compete with the newer instruments that came along and the few remaining Psalmodikons today are tucked away in Museums or attics.

The enthusiasm and work that the members of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet are doing today certainly help keep this tradition alive. I am a firm believer that even if the Psalmodikon may not rank with the violin or the mighty pipe organ, it still deserves an honored place in the orchestra of sacred music. And it is up to each one of us to keep it there.

Let us celebrate the Psalmodikon whose birth date is June 15, 1835!

In the meantime....."keep practicing".

Beatrice Hole

NOLA FOSLIEN
by Beatrice Hole

In February 1976, Nola Foslien of Garfield, Minnesota read a news article about Henry Storhoff of Lanesboro, MN and his Norwegian salmodikon. That prompted Nola to go to the attic and bring down a salmodikon that belonged to her husband's grandmother. being a self-taught pianist and organist and guided by Mr. Storhoff's comments in the article, she soon mastered the instrument. Nola's salmodikon was about the same size and age as Henry Storhoff's and she also rests the salmodikon on a special stand when playing. Nola's salmodikon has a guitar E-string tuned to middle C. Besides religious songs, she enjoyed playing tunes such as "Big Rock Candy Mountain" and "Seeing Nellie Home," often accompanied by her husband on the organ. Together the two of them enjoyed playing at many of the local functions until his death in 1993.

One of the highlights for Nola was taking part in the 1976 Bicentennial celebration in Alexandria, Minnesota, where she played and demonstrated on her old salmodikon.

In 1995, Nola decided the salmodikon should be given back to the Foslien side of the family. It was put on the auction block at the family reunion and sold to the highest bidder for \$350!

Nola's nephew, Floyd Foslien, was the lucky recipient. Floyd is now a member of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet and has mastered the art of making beautiful Psalmodikon music and has also built several more Psalmodikons.

I had the pleasure of meeting and visiting with Nola Foslien in October of 1996. She is a delightful lady and I just wish I had known her when she was actively playing the Psalmodikon. She now resides at an apartment in Brandon, Minnesota. She often writes me that she wishes she were closer to the Psalmodikon group and could hear us play!



Nola Foslien & Mr. Foslien

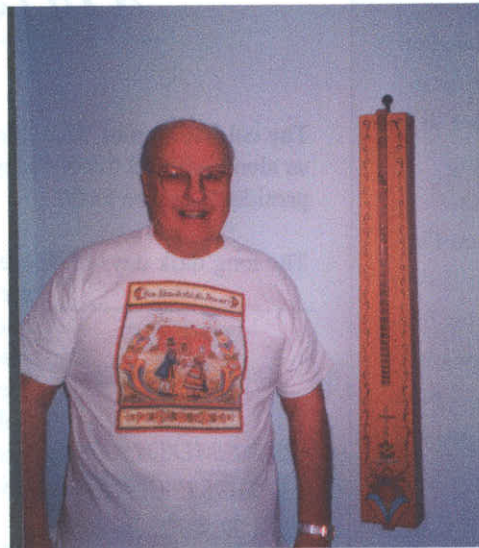
A church bulletin blooper:

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?" Come early and hear our Choir practice.

NOT EVERYONE PURCHASES A PSALMODIKON TO MAKE MUSIC!

Herb Nelson, the retired banker of Fairfax, MN, became so enthused about Psalmodikons when he first learned of them that he decided he just had to have one to hang on the wall of his Swedish Stuga! Here is a photo of Herb, the proud owner of a Psalmodikon. He decided to go all the way and asked Bobbi Peterson, who teaches folk art painting at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis, to decorate his Psalmodikon with the Swedish style of Dala painting.

We are all envious of you Mr. Nelson!



Herb Nelson & his Psalmodikon

The Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet Newsletter is published in March(April), August and November. The editor and staff are always looking for news worthy items or photos and welcome articles from members that you want to share with other readers. Your \$5.00 membership fee helps to cover the cost of printing and postage for the Newsletter and also helps to defray the costs incurred at the Annual Meeting. The Newsletter is mailed to over 78 households as well as several Museums and other historical societies.

Correction: In the last issue of the Psalmodikon Newsletter, the name of **Betty Knivslund** was inadvertently omitted from the list of the Psalmodikon members who performed with the Psalmodikon group at the annual meeting in Granite Falls last September. Our apologies go out to Betty!