

NOTES FROM
MUSIC-ON-A-STRING
By Beatrice Hole

insert photo of CD cover

A couple of things come to mind since I wrote the last issue of the Newsletter. One of the highlights was my visit to Norway in August. The trip was a vacation with the family, but along the way I made several contacts with friends, family, and other psalmodikon enthusiasts. As you know, I am always anxious to learn more about psalmodikon history. We traveled from Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and back to Oslo. Have any of you ever visited the Ringve Museum in Trondheim? There is a very nice psalmodikon display there.

The psalmodikon, as well as many other crafts, has lost its familiarity over the years. Now the Scandinavians are looking to Americans to re-learn the craft which was really theirs in the beginning.

The other exciting happening was that shortly after I returned from Norway, the album of psalmodikon music, in 4-part harmony was released. As you recall, the Psalmodikon Quartet (Joan Saathoff, Kathy Pedersen, Floyd Foslien and I) traveled to Hendricks, MN to make this historical recording of psalmodikon music.

Not to be boastful, but I think this CD is one that should be in every home! It makes for easy listening with an assortment of our favorite songs and not all are instrumental. There are several songs recorded with the Adult Choir, Children's Choir, and other voices. With the modern day recording technology, this makes for a beautiful sounding CD. The psalmodikons have never sounded better!

This is a "must have" on your Christmas list!

JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS!

To order send \$15.00 to:
Singsaas Lutheran Church
19716 487th Ave.
Hendricks, MN 56736

or online at: www.countrychurchmusic.com

Best wishes for the Holidays and may you always have a song in your heart and music at your fingertips!

NEW WEBSITE MANAGER NEEDED

Paul Gjenvick has been so generous with his time and talents in maintaining a website for the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet these last few years. He recently informed me that he is no longer able to do this for us. I know there are many of you that have much knowledge of the computer and I would very much like to hear from someone who would be willing to take on this task. There are so many folks around the world that have used our website to get better acquainted with the history of the psalmodikon. I would be very sad if we are no longer able to have a psalmodikon website

Please call me at: 952-934-4535

(photo)

PSALMODIKONS IN VOLDA NORWAY

While on tour in Norway, I had the privilege of meeting Torbjørn Strand, Frode Strømnes, and Kahrin Lunde from Volda. They traveled over mountains and fjords one evening to meet me at the Alexandra Hotel in Loen to talk about psalmodikons!

We became acquainted through e-mailing one another as a result of their search for psalmodikon history and came upon our Psalmodikon Web Site.

Torbjørn is a retired Chief Engineer and technical college teacher. He has an astonishingly broad knowledge of all technical things. People seek him from far away, because he knows how to repair almost anything from radios to sewing machines. He became interested in the psalmodikon and its music when he was recently asked to repair one. Torbjørn says his parents owned a psalmodikon when he was a child, but he did not learn to play it then. Now he would like to make up for this ill-used childhood time by continuing to repair old psalmodikons into playing condition and gathering information and history of the psalmodikon for the future. He is a new member of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet. He also purchased the

Psalmodikon Songbook and a pattern. Torbjørn envisions starting a psalmodikon club in Norway. I gave him the names of several other psalmodikon enthusiasts in Norway to contact.

Katrin said that she remembers learning music on a psalmodikon back in the 1950's.

There are four psalmodikons on display in the museum in Volda. The director is interested in the history of the psalmodikon and suggested they arrange an evening of lectures about the instrument. People in the secluded fjords have conserved many traditions better than inhabitants in the urbanized area. The museums in this area have kept their psalmodikons on the shelves.

Frode is a retired researcher in experimental psychology, who also has actively tried to preserve items and traditions from the past. He plays the violin and has taught himself to make violins and repair stringed instruments. Torbjørn contacted him for advice about the psalmodikon, because Frode is acquainted with the ways of repairing previously used instruments. Frode is very futuristic and believes that there are people around who would still be interested in reviving the old art of playing the psalmodikon. He would like to experiment in "fine tuning" the psalmodikon and thus it might be more attractive for encouraging the younger people to play and carry on the psalmodikon tradition.

(photo)

Psalmodikons on display in Volda Village Museum

PSALMODIKONS AT THE MAIHAUGEN MUSEUM

I had an interesting meeting with my friend, Kristy Kreckling, who is an employee of the Maihaugen Museum in Lillehammer. We decided we first met each other in 1995 and have kept in touch ever since through our love of psalmodikons.

Kristy enjoys reading the Psalmodikon Newsletters from cover to cover and always passes them on to other interested folks in the Museum. She commented on how interesting and educational they are and is amazed as to how the psalmodikon continues to be so popular in the USA.

Kristy has designed a new music room, at Maihaugen, that includes a very attractive display of psalmodikons.

(photo)

In another area of the Museum is a huge display of all church related objects. I found a psalmodikon there as well. It was very nicely displayed with a bow and an old hymn book written in sifferskrift for psalmodikons. I am fortunate enough to own the same songbook -- "Choral-Melodier for Psalmodicon", written in accordance with the Royal Resolution of 15th Juni 1835, authorized choral book of J. A. Lindeman, Christiania, 1866.

While touring the outdoor areas of the museum, I noticed a psalmodikon in the old schoolhouse. It was in playing condition and I could not resist playing a few songs for the group. Kristy should be real proud of the contributions she is making to psalmodikon history!

NORDIC-AMERICAN PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET MEETING

The 12th Annual meeting of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet was held at the West Immanuel Lutheran Church of rural Oseola, WI. Kathy Pedersen and her group of eleven psalmodikon players (WIPP) hosted the event and served a very delicious noon lunch!

There were 17 psalmodikon players in attendance plus several other psalmodikon enthusiasts that stopped by for a short visit.

Kathy Pedersen does a great job of not only transposing the music to accommodate the psalmodikon, but for the meeting, she provided many sheets of music to bring everyone's songbook up to date! It was approved that the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet purchase a large carton of computer paper to replenish her supply. It was also decided that we would give a donation of \$50.00 to West Immanuel Lutheran Church for the use of their facilities.

Most of the psalmodikon players returned to participate in the Sunday morning worship service held at 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

Treasurer, Larry Gjenvick, reported that income from annual membership dues through September 2008 were \$335.00 and expenses for the Psalmodikon Newsletter was \$195.63.

The Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet has 72 members as of this date.

Respectfully submitted,

Beatrice Hole, Ordfører

DO YOU REMEMBER?

How the beat of Bo Diddley’s guitar changed the course of Rock & Roll music? Bo was born Ellas Bates in McComb, Mississippi, 1928-2008.

psalmodikon w/ painting

The very name Bo Diddley implies a single chord, though he disclaimed having known the term “diddley bow” when he began using this as his stage name.

One of our new members, Herb Nelson, of Lake, Elmo, MN recently purchased one of the beautiful psalmodikons made by Floyd Foslien. Herb had Shirley Evenstad, a well-known Rosemaler, paint a picture of his mother’s home in Selbu Norway.

The diddley bow, a single strand of wire nailed at both ends to a board, was a fundamental African music instrument of the down-home American South.

ITEMS FOR SALE

PSALMODIKON SONGBOOK written in Sifferskrift and 4-part harmony for psalmodikons.

\$19.00

VIDEO “HOW TO PLAY THE PSALMODIKON”

Instructions on how to tune and play the psalmodikon. Sifferskrift music is included to play along with the video. The video also gives psalmodikon history and makes good program material for a presentation about psalmodikons.

\$15.00

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6560 Leesborough Av., Eden Prairie, MN 55346

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String	1.25
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Maple fret board w/frets	25.00
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Send orders to: Floyd Foslien
567 High Ridge Drive, Hudson, WI 54016
www.fffoslien@sbcglobal.net

GRANDFATHER'S PSALMODIKON, OR
THE PSALMODIKON IN AMERICA
Ardith K. Melloh

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The Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly
October 1981

Part 3

This salmodikon was made from a box made of thin wood, 30 inches long, 6 inches wide, and 5 inches deep, and said to have been a cigar box. It was open at the bottom, had a gut string and capital letters, not numbers, were carefully drawn beside the fingerboard because Mr. Olson played from musical notes, not numbers. He signed and dated it 1887. The salmodikon and a reed organ, purchased for Verna's mother when she was eleven, are preserved by the family.

So far no records of Finnish immigrants using this instrument have been found. Early Swedish Methodists and Baptists certainly knew about Dillner's method. Peter Cassel became a charter member of the New Sweden Methodist Church. Anders, a brother of Eric Norelius, was an early Baptist preacher and missionary. When Gustaf Palmquist came in 1851 he worked with Esbjörn in Galesburg, Illinois. The next year he was baptized and for five years worked zealously to establish Baptist congregations. After he returned to Sweden as a missionary he and his brother Per published *Pilgrims-Sånger på Vägen till det Himmelska Sion* (Songs of Pilgrims on the Way to the Heavenly Zion) in 1859 with an edition in *sifferskrift*. Although the psalmodikon was widely used in pioneer days it evidently was not deemed worthy of mentioning in print later. Reverend J. Irving Ericson writes that he does not remember seeing any references to it in his reading and research for his book *Twice-Born Hymns*.

Only in one American musical reference book, *Musical Instruments: A Comprehensive Dictionary* by Sibyl Marcuse, have I found the psalmodicon (*sic*) listed. Unfortunately that brief article differs considerably from the information given here. No mention is made of the numerical notation by which the instrument was played nor of its use in Norway, Finland, and the United States; it states that the number of melody strings was increased to four, or to one or two melody strings plus a variable number of drones and that strings were plucked. It is true that some Swedish instruments had drone strings, but they were never played and the single melody string was played with a bow.

It was to sustain the sound while the finger moved from one interval to another on the fingerboard that supplementary or drone strings were sometimes stretched along the top of the box on each side of the melody string. As many as sixteen have been found on one instrument and occasionally they were even placed inside the box. Over the years changes in the style and shape of the wooden box appeared. In southern Sweden some were made with unusually narrow upper ends, while others had a rounded lower end. Dr. Gilstring writes that the Jean Sibelius Museum in Åbo (Turku), Finland, has a collection of unusual and well-made psalmodikons. However, the long, rectangular box remained the popular style.

On the basis of his careful inventory of selected areas, Dr. Gilstring estimates that, in spite of the destruction of many old instruments, there are still about ten thousand psalmodikons in private hands in all of Sweden, most of them now unplayable. Yet in 1970 one woman, who lived with her husband in a remote place without electricity, played hers for pleasure and comfort as she dreamed of the day when power lines would reach their home and they could have electric heat and maybe a television set. Another woman and several men, including one in a Swedish-speaking district of Finland, play their instruments for family devotions and special events. One such occasion was the memorial service in the Östervåla church on the one hundredth anniversary of Dillner's death, when four psalmodikons played the four-part harmony of a choral. Another choral was played on Dillner's own favorite instrument, which was said to have a cello-like tone.

Dr. Oscar N. Olson wrote in his 1943 article that four museums in the United States had psalmodikons. Today the Goodhue County (Minnesota) Historical Society Museum still has the one that belonged to Reverend Eric Norelius. It is 42 inches long by 8 1/2 and 4 inches wide at the respective ends and 3 inches deep, with four drone strings. The Smithsonian Institution now has only one, made in Norway and purchased in 1895. I have no information on the one at the local museum in Cokato, Minnesota. Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, now owns three, two of which are on display in the Special Collections Room of the Denkmann Memorial Library. One is a large tapered rectangular box with 12 drone strings of thin wire, made by Ole Pierson in Sweden and donated by his daughter. The other, donated by Dr. O. N. Olson in 1944, is a rectangular box with two f-holes and no extra strings. It ranks with the Norelius instrument in historical interest as it was played by Reverend Hasselquist and possibly also by reverend Olof Olson. Their third instrument was made by Johan Peter Lindstrom at Paxton, Illinois, between 1860 and 1865 and is now on loan to the Archives of the Lutheran Church in America in Chicago. Lindstrom used it when he led the singing at weekly devotional meetings. It is one of the largest, being 42 inches long, 12 and 5 inches wide at the respective ends and 4 inches deep, with four drone strings and an incurve on the player's side. A similar instrument with the same incurve, but smaller in size, was described and pictured by Dr. Olson in his *Lutheran Companion* article. It is now the property of his son, C. Marcus Olson of Newark, Delaware, who remembers his father sometimes played it at Christmas time and that it had a low tone more like a cello than a violin. It has a gut string and no drones. Mr. Olson believes this psalmodikon could have been adequate for a small church sanctuary, particularly if it was supplemented by a small choir.

New information keeps adding more instruments to those previously known to exist. The Historical Museum in New Sweden, Maine, received from the late Bror Gustafson a well-preserved, rectangular psalmodikon made by Nils Mattiason in Skatelöv parish, Småland (in Kronobergs län). There is one at the Erlander House Museum in Rockford, Illinois. Chisago Lake Church at Center City, Minnesota, and the nearby Magnuson

Museum each have one. The Chisago Lake instrument may be unique in that the normally white fingerboard intervals were painted black and the others left unpainted. The Steeple Building Museum at Bishop Hill, Illinois, has one made by Peter Hedlund in the early 1870's. There are two in the Archives at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. The small rectangular one was donated by Elmer Anderson of St. Peter about twenty years ago and Mrs. Conrad Peterson, college archivist, remembers hearing it played by Charles Anderson, father of the donor. The other one has an exceptionally graceful shape with the lower part slightly enlarged by gently curved sides that complement the two f-holes. It probably dates from pioneer days and was a gift of John A. Sjoquist in 1947. Unfortunately its maker is unknown. Carl T. Widen remembers there was once a psalmodikon in the Swedish log cabin at Garden Center, Zilker Park, Austin, Texas. Now only a copy of a Swedish Psalmbok in *sifferskrift*, formerly used in the home of a local Olson family, is preserved in the Texas Swedish Pioneers Association Library. People in Jamestown, New York, do not remember seeing an instrument there, but some remember it from Sweden.

Because so few people today would recognize the old instrument or its music there is a danger that those currently stored in attics and storage rooms may be discarded and lost. Armed with a description of the instrument and its music, Wesley Mattson, vice-president of the Smoky Valley Historical Association, asked the curator of the McPherson County Museum in Lindsborg, Kansas, to search the museum's storage area. There they found the psalmodikon that had been made by Andrew Hokanson and donated to the Bethany College Museum from the Oliver Hawkinson estate. It is now exhibited in the Swedish Pavilion of the Museum. A privately owned copy of *Pilgrims- Sångar* with melodies in *sifferskrift* has also been located.

The largest known collection in this country is in Decorah, Iowa, where Vesterheim, the Norwegian-American Museum, has fourteen *salmodikons* and a number of music books in storage waiting to be cataloged. There is limited information on early acquisitions, but for more recent ones they have all the facts the donors could supply. Their salmodikons are all straight-sided, rectangular boxes with few variations and no drone strings. The majority have transpositional boards and some are displayed in or with their original cases. Frequently they are smaller than the Swedish instruments. One made by Carl J. G. Felland of Stoughton, Wisconsin, in 1905 is 34 ½ inches long, 3 and 5/8 inches wide and 1 and 7/8 inches deep. It has a metal key for tuning the string and five transpositional boards. Another, said to be made by Erik P. Egge who settled near Decorah in 1851 or 1852, is only 33 ¼ by 3 ½ by 1 ½ inches and has three transpositional boards. Both have the bows by which they were played and a songbook with numbers accompanied the latter.

Not only is the instrument still used on special occasions in Sweden, but it is also remembered in Norway. A newspaper clipping tells of a salmodikon being added to the school museum in Drammen, Norway, in 1980. Karen

Vermund describes her early life in a forest district where her father was a schoolmaster after World War I: *The salmodikon is very familiar to me. We had one in our home and my Dad often used it in his classroom. At that time children had 30 min. singing every day, Mon.-Sat., in school. We also had an organ, a piano, a violin (which my father also used in class) a guitar, a zither, a flute and bells. Having no radio, TV, no movies, no outside entertainment, we made our own music.....*

So far it has not been documented that Swedish-Americans used psalmodikons after 1900, but Mr. Felland was still making them for Norwegians. Mrs. Florence Dybdahl of Chicago documents that a group, known as the "Harmonium Ladies," played salmodikons in ensemble in Stoughton, Wisconsin, in 1929. Burns Kaupanger, Stoughton historian, writes that Stoughton was founded in 1847 by Luke Stoughton from Vermont, but Norwegians had started settling in that area already in 1844. It became the focal point for immigrants who later moved westward. There are still hundreds there who maintain their Norwegian heritage. Six Lutheran churches lie within a radius of six miles and some people there have firsthand knowledge of the salmodikon. At least seven instruments are known to be in the area, six of them made by C.J.G. Felland.

Clara Asbjörnson, age 97, writes that she learned to play the salmodicon ("as we called it") by numbers instead of notes. It was very easy to learn to play. Mrs. Felland, whose husband made the instruments, was the teacher. The group had no name and played music in two and three-part harmony. Once they played at a Ladies Aid meeting.

Alma Tenjum says her grandparents came to this country when her mother was a year old. The salmodikon they brought with them was destroyed in a fire. She bought her own instrument, made in 1870 by Hans J. Hamrum of Verona, Wisconsin, in 1943 and was taught to play it directly from regular musical notation by the school music teacher, Pearl Lillesand. They often played two-part harmony and both belonged to a quartet that played hymns for church and school programs. She thinks salmodikons may have been played in public in the 1950's but is not certain of the exact date.

Miss Tenjum's instrument is 34 inches long, 3 ½ inches wide and 2 and 1/8 inches deep. She uses a cello A-string. It is a soprano and she corroborates statements made by others that salmodikons were soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, depending on differences in size and string. They were used for church services and by teachers in schools. She never knew of their being used for dance or secular music. Although transpositional boards were usually used on Norwegian instruments, she did not use one on hers as it had a piano-like keyboard, marked beside the frets, on which were both the numbers and the letters of the notes. Unmarked intervals were the sharps and flats.

No effort has been made to check on the music in numerical notation that still exists in this country. The *National Union Catalog* lists the well-known Swedish hymnals and religious songbooks, but none I checked

were described as having music in *sifferskrift*. The Denkmann Memorial Library at Augustana College has files of *Det Rätta Hemlandet* and a copy of *Salems Sånger* by Norelius is in its rare book collection. A careful check of the collection could show more. The Archives of the Minnesota Synod at Gustavus Adolphus College had *Salems Sånger* as well the *Handbok för Söndagsskolan* by Norelius and six other songbooks plus files of *Det Rätta Hemlandet*. A check of other academic, church, and private libraries, as well as the Swedish Pioneer Historical Society Archives, and the Lutheran Church in America Archives, both in Chicago, could show that a surprising number of music books for the instrument still survive.

Although considerable information on the psalmodikon has been published in Sweden, Dr. Gilstring reports there is no comprehensive study of it. I hope he will write one. Eeg-Olofsson's book on Dillner devotes a whole chapter to the psalmodikon in Swedish literature, listing the places where it is mentioned. American readers may have been curious when they read in Moberg's *The Emigrants*, "The farmer of Kårragårde picked up his psalmodikon; he tuned the instrument and began to hum the hymn while he listened to the howling snowstorm outside....." This scene, in which the self-styled prophet, Danjel Andreasson—perhaps modeled after Eric Jansson—plays the instrument, is also included in Jan Troell's film version of the novel. Of the three poems Dr. Gilstring sent, "Psalmodikon" by Anders Österling is the best known and Dr. Olson used an English translation of the first verse in his Lutheran Companion article. The others are: "Psalmodikon: Till minne av mormors far, Olof Mårtensson, Kyrkovård i Svey," by Georg Granberg (Psalmodikon: In Memory of Grandmother's Father, Olof Mårtensson, Church Warden of Svey) and "Nattvardsgårdsgången i Fjåset," by Samuel Gabrielsson (The Lord's Supper at Fjåset).

Even after seeing a psalmodikon I never really expected to hear one, but that came true on July 28, 1978, at the Nordic Fest in Decorah, Iowa, when Henry Storhoff of Lanesboro, Minnesota, played his Norwegian salmodikon. He does not know who made it, but it has been in his family for about a hundred years and was given to him by his grandparents Kulsrud of rural Lanesboro about thirty years ago. It had been used in their farm home and also to lead the singing at the local parochial school. It is made of spruce with some pine wood and is 40 by 3 ½ by 1 ½ inches with a single string and a finger board marked by metal frets. After making necessary repairs he taught himself to play it, aided by an instruction book from Norway. Being a fiddler, he used both a violin bow and technique to produce vibrato, as he pressed the string down just behind the fret. This gives a smooth melody, pleasing to present-day listeners. Although he has a Norwegian book with music in numerical notation, he plays by ear and has marked the letters on his instrument. To produce more volume for large audiences, he uses a steel string tuned to G below middle C and rests the instrument on a stand constructed to hold it with a minimum of physical contact. This gives more resonance than the traditional way and he is able to produce a volume of sound somewhat less than that of a good violin. From comments made by people in the audience and the way

they joined in singing the last hymn, "What a Friend We Have In Jesus," there was no question that others enjoyed hearing it as much as I did.

As a result of an article in the Minneapolis Star on February 23, 1976, the television station KTTC in Rochester, Minnesota, featured Mr. Storhoff on a newscast. This was picked up by NBC and broadcast nationally. Afterwards he heard from many people in various parts of the United States who knew of the instrument. However, none wrote to say that they also played it.

When Mrs. Nola Foslein of Garfield, Minnesota, read about Mr. Storhoff, she brought the salmodikon her husband's grandmother had played down from the attic. Being a self-taught pianist and organist and guided by Mr. Storhoff's comments in the article, she soon mastered it. Her salmodikon is about the same size and age as his and she also rests it on a special stand when playing. She also rests it on a special stand when playing. She believes hers is an alto salmodikon and she uses a guitar E-string tuned to middle C. Besides religious songs, she also plays tunes like "Big Rock Candy Mountain" and "Seeing Nellie Home," often accompanied by her husband on the organ. Mrs. Foslien has made the same folk use of her instrument as earlier Norwegians, Swedes, and other immigrants probably did. As part of the 1976 Bicentennial celebration she demonstrated her old instrument at a craft fair and an article about her, with pictures, appeared in the Alexandria, Minnesota, newspaper, *Lake Region Echo*, on July 6, 1976.

Harlis Anderson of North St. Paul, Minnesota, first saw his instrument as a child and his father told him it was a "*Salmedikt*" that his uncle, Peter Halvorson Anderson, had made in 1867 when the family lived on a homestead north of St. Ansgar, Iowa. He found it again in 1962 in the attic of his parent's home, but not until he recently heard about Mr. Storhoff did he restore it and start to play. He also plays only by ear—hymns, folk songs, and any easy flowing melody that he knows—and has been kept busy playing at church functions, Sons of Norway meetings, and similar events. As his salmodikon is signed and dated, he knows his uncle was only ten years old when he hollowed out the two-by-four board of linden or basswood and nailed two end-pieces on it, leaving the bottom open. Mr. Anderson thinks the father helped his son make the fingerboard with its carved wooden frets. The numbers are burned into the wood. Mr. Anderson uses a guitar E-string which he tunes to C. Since the instrument has neither a bottom nor a sound hole he places it on a bare wooden table or a special soundboard when he plays. Although the carving is crude and the wood unfinished, the tone is mellow and pleasing.

The psalmodikon made in 1868 and signed on the bottom by its maker, James Lindstrom of Carver, Minnesota, is now owned by Earl Porter of Minneapolis. When Lindstrom left the Chisago Lake congregation, where he had been a parochial teacher, he sold his instrument to Mr. Porter's uncle, William Lonquist. Earl Porter writes:

I salvaged it from my grandmother's attic back in the 1930's, where water from a leaking roof had dripped on it and about a dozen ground cherry shells had found their

way into it. In spite of this neglect, my instrument is in the best condition of the five or six I have seen.

It is 40 inches long, 8 inches wide at the bottom, and 5 inches at the top, and 4 inches deep. Originally it had eight drone strings, but Mr. Porter prefers to use just a cello A-string tuned to C below middle C. With little squares of masking tape he marks the notes E, G, C, and E as an aid in finding his way around the long finger board and rests his psalmodikon on a table. Both Mr. Porter and Dr. Emeroy Johnson took part in the annual 1971 Swedish Communion Service at Chisago Lake, their home church. Dr. Johnson preached the sermon and Mr. Porter played Hymn no. 66 in the 1819 *Koral-Bok* ("*Se Jesus är ett tröstrikt namn*") first alone and then accompanying the choir as it sang the four verses. This was the first time those attending the service had heard a psalmodikon. Later a tape was made of Mr. Porter playing two Christmas hymns. Hearing the often mentioned slight buzz of the string as he played the well-loved no. 55, it was easy to believe that such deep, rather cello-like music had led early immigrants as they sang "Var hälsad sköna morgenstund" (All Hail To Thee, O Blessed Morn) at *julotta* on a cold Christmas morning.

People have asked if it would be possible to make a psalmodikon and when Harold D. Laurence of Westminster, Colorado, inquired about directions for doing so, the instructions from Grandfather's 1846 Psalmbook were sent to him. He found the directions for playing the numerical notation very clear and detailed, but those for making the instrument rather inadequate. However, after some experimenting, he now has a handsome instrument with a "beautiful, very resonant tone", which he plays from regular musical notation. This may be the first psalmodikon made in this country since the first part of the century. Those thinking of making one may want to write to Mr. Laurence and profit by his experience.

The psalmodikon is a unique instrument inasmuch as it was designed for a specific purpose, was widely used in schools, was closely associated with a religious movement, became a folk instrument, was transplanted to a new land where, when it had served its purpose as a pioneer instrument, it almost faded from memory. Because of its limitations it probably cannot find a place in today's musical world except as a curiosity. Yet it is part of our Scandinavian heritage and it should not be forgotten. Possibly its place in our cultural life is best illustrated by the account of early music in the book *Smoky Valley People*, by E. K. Lindquist. When Pastor Olof Olson, a well-trained musician and ordained pastor, moved to Lindsborg, Kansas, in 1869 he started choir practice that very fall. As only he, his wife and a doctor could read music, Pastor Olson changed all the notes in his music into numbers and then copied the numbers into little books for the choir members so they could learn their parts at home. The choir became well known for its singing, but changing notes into numbers and copying them took so much of the Pastor's time that he soon began teaching choir members to read music by drawing notes on a homemade blackboard. From this beginning came the famous "Messiah" tradition of oratorio singing at Lindsborg. From such beginnings also came many fine church choirs and a continuing love of music.

This concludes the story.

