



Birka732.com

Birka Banner

Birka Lodge, Vasa Order of America

November/December 2015

Message from the Chair

Greetings to all Birka members. It's time again for Birka's biggest fund raising event of the year. The lodge needs your help and support to make the fair as successful as it always has been. If you have not yet signed up to help at the fair, the signup sheet will be available at the **November 20th** meeting or you can call me. We will also need help **setting up** and decorating the Community House on **Friday evening, November 27, starting at 5:00 p.m.** The tables are always quite busy when the fair first opens and additional help is appreciated.

We are also requesting contributions for the **Grabs Table, valued at \$5.00 or more.** Items should be new and wrapped in holiday paper without its price. We need gifts labeled for boys, girls, men, or women. Home baked goods are also requested for the **Bake Table** and should be priced beforehand.

Please copy, post, and distribute to family, friends, and colleagues the enclosed flyer. Many of our lodge members and table chairs have worked hard to prepare for the fair. We have imported gift items, linens, jewelry, books, Dala horses, candles and candleholders from Sweden as well as imported foods for your Christmas and holiday table. **The Lucia procession will take place at 12:00 noon.** Please mark the date and come and support your lodge. I look forward to seeing you there. It would be great if you have a folk costume or Scandinavian sweater to wear to the fair!

At the **September 25th** meeting, the Refreshment Committee, chaired by Audrey DiPillo, provided delicious refreshments. Following the meeting, we had a wonderful presentation by Christina Mealey, Cultural Director at the Scandinavian Living Center in West Newton.

The **October 23rd** Halloween Potluck Supper was well attended, and everyone enjoyed the delicious casseroles, salads, and desserts brought by the great cooks in the lodge. Thank you to Janet Muller and her committee for coordinating and setting up the hall. No one went home hungry! Thank you to everyone. We had a wonderful group of costumed members. Thank you to all who participated. Prizes were awarded and a list of winners appears on page 3.

Thank you to Ann-Marie Breuer for providing the prizes and to our two judges: Linda Boylan and Inga-Lill Olsson. Also, thank you to our musician, Bob Landoni, for providing music.

The Activities Committee met on **October 17** at Marlys Mahajan's and discussed the Jul Fair and upcoming events. The next Activities Committee meeting will be held on **November 15 at 2:30 p.m.** at Judy Tanzer's to discuss final details for the Fair and plan the January events.

Your annual dues for 2016 of **\$25** per person is due in January. Lodge dues should be paid by the end of April. Make your check payable to **Birka Lodge No. 732**, and mail it to our Financial Secretary, Linda Boylan at 12 Upton Lane, Boxford, MA 01921. (Phone: 978-887-3917).

Early Bird Dues Drawing: Anyone who pays their 2016 dues of \$25 before the end of 2015 will have his/her name entered in a drawing to receive an extra year of membership **FREE.**
PLEASE PAY DUES EARLY! Thank you.

The **November 20th meeting** will be the final meeting for the year. We will have a **“Surprise Gift Grab”** auction. **Members are asked to bring a nicely wrapped gift – funny or serious – to be auctioned off after the meeting.** Thank you to Andrea and Mike Swanson and their committee, who will be providing the refreshments. Nomination and election of officers for the 2016 term will be held. Please contact Mike Bagnulo if you do not plan on remaining in your current office. Thank you. The lodge needs your participation.

The **Lucia Rehearsal** will be held on **Sunday, November 22, at 3:00 p.m.** at the Community House. Lucia this year is Ashley Bakos, granddaughter of lodge members Nancy and Gordon Hayward. New children are welcome. Please contact me if you are interested. Also on **Sunday, November 22, from 11:00 to 3:00pm** Marlys Mahajan will host a Cookie Bake. Please see Marlys for details.

The first event for 2016 is our annual **Children’s Tree Plundering Party**, which will be held **Sunday, January 10 at 3:00 p.m. at the Community House.** Music, storytelling, dancing around the Christmas tree, gifts, refreshments, and a visit from Tomten are planned. Additional information and cost will be mailed out in early December. A sign up sheet will be available at the November meeting.

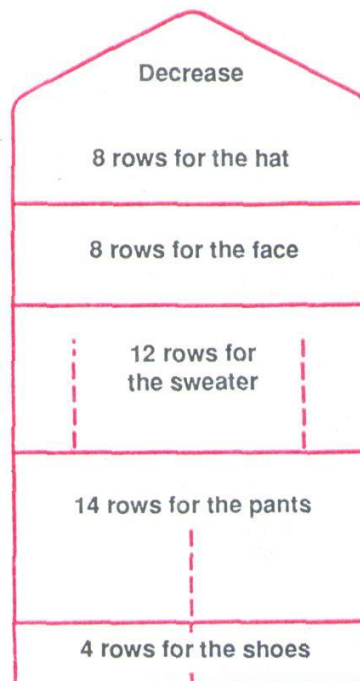
I look forward to seeing many of you at the **November 20th meeting** as well as at the **Christmas Fair on Saturday, November 28**, and at the **January 10 Tree Plundering Party**. Your presence is requested to support and encourage your lodge and its officers.

Best wishes for a peaceful and joyful holiday season. God Jul och Gott Nytt Ar!

In truth and unity,
Linda Christianson, PDM, Chairman



Knit a Christmas Tomte



HEARTY BIRKA BIRTHDAY WISHES TO THESE MEMBERS:

. . . in November

4 Linda Boylan	24 Ron Holmgren
5 Joanne Emerson	25 Jane Atherton
8 Andrea Holmgren	30 Maggie Starrak
19 Sonja Prior	

. . . in December

1 Bob Landoni	10 Richard Johnson
3 Marilyn Seaberg	11 Alison Landoni
5 Gus Bolmgren	17 Cynthia Olsen
9 Mary Anne Hawkes	19 Kari DeLacey
9 Sharon Guidara	19 Andrea Swanson

REFRESHMENT COMMITTEES

Surprise Gift Grab Auction November 20

Andrea and Mike Swanson,
co-chair
Karin Caves
Sharon and June Guidara
Sheila and Richard Sunman

Stamps and Stories January 22

Judy Tanzer, chair
Gus, Eric, Greg Blomgren
Denise Esperson,
Mary Anne Hawkes
Mike and Andrea Swanson



. . 'ROUND THE LODGE

For college age and soon-to-be college age members The national lodge, Vasa Order of America, gives out eight \$1,000 scholarships each year. The deadline for applications this year is February 15. Check the Vasa website for details about this year's application process.

Cookie Bake Our third annual Cookie Bake will be held at Marlys Mahajan's on November 21. Join us any time between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. and you can mix, mold, decorate, bag, or label cookies for as much time as you have available. Marlys will provide the basics – flour, butter, sugar, oven, mixer, etc. You can bring a favorite recipe or use one of ours. Just let Marlys know (978-468-4423) and we will put you to work!

Website Remember to check Birka Lodge's website. The web address is found below. The website is maintained by Richard Lilja. Thank you, Richard.

Sick Benefit Fund If you have been a Vasa member for five years or more and have paid your dues, you are entitled to receive assistance with medical expenses from the Grand Lodge. Each member is entitled to receive up to \$3,000. If you would like an application, please contact Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer.

Change of Address Please notify Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer, of any address changes, either in writing at 3 Anthony Road, Hamilton, MA 01982, or by phoning her at 978-468-7407. Thank you.

Birka Banner is a bi-monthly newsletter, published by Birka Lodge 32, Vasa Order of America, and on the web as www.birka732.com

Linda Christianson, Chairperson
Marlys Mahajan, Editor
Richard Lilja, Webmaster

HEXAN FUN AT THE OCTOBER MEETING

The October meeting was a howling success! The potluck dinner was sumptuous, and to celebrate the season, member came dressed in Halloween creative costumes. Prizes were presented to the best costumes, as judged by Linda Boylan and Inga-Lill Olsson. The winners were the following.

Most Scary: Denise Esperson (skeleton)

Best Animals: Greg Blomgren (chicken) and Sheila Sunman (home-made cat costume!)

Most Elegant: Janet Muller (butterfly)

Most Glamorous: Judy Tanzer

Most Cuddly: Ann DeLacey (Raggedy Ann)

Tallest Bottle of Beer: Frank Ryan

Best Sportsman: Nathaniel Morris (goalie) and Eric Blomgren (soccer player)

Best Life: Andrew, friend of the Blomgren's

Thank you, Ann-Marie, for providing the prizes and encouraging the great costumes!

REMINDERS . . .

Table Chairs and Workers: *Please refrain from taking down your displays before the fair ends at 2:30 p.m., no matter how much or little foot traffic we have. It is distracting to last minute shoppers if we are closing down the displays rather than serving our customers. Thank you.*

- Bring a seasonally wrapped gift to the November meeting. Come prepared to bid on the creative items that member have brought in.
- Dues that are paid before December 31 are eligible to win free dues for 2017. Pay your dues early and be entered in the drawing.

- Remember to sign up with Linda Boylan if you wish to join us for dinner after working your shift at the Jul Fair.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November

- 15 Activities meeting at Judy Tanzer's home, 2:30 p.m.
- 20 Lodge meeting, "Surprise Gift Grabs Auction", 7:30 p.m.
- 22 Lucia Practice, 3 p.m.
Cookie Bake at Mahajan's, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- 27 Setup for Jul Fair, 5 p.m.
- 28 Jul Fair, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

December

God Jul!



January

- 10 Tree Plundering, 3 p.m.
 - 22 Lodge meeting, "Stamps and Stories", 7:30 p.m.
-

JUL MÅRKNÅD

Saturday, November 28, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

You can help by

- Lending a hand at set-up time, Friday, November 27, at 5 p.m.
- Contributing one to four \$5 gift grabs, labeled for men, women, boy, or girl,
- Donating baked goods for the bake table,
- Signing up to help at one of the tables on Saturday morning.

SWEDISH YULE FAIR

(Traditional Jul Marknad)

Saturday, November 28th

9:00am-2:30pm



Hamilton/Wenham Community House
(Bay Road Route 1-A)

FREE ADMISSION

Lucia (Bride of Light) 12:00 noon

Scandinavian & American HOLIDAY MUSIC (all day)

LUNCH AT NOON: Assorted, Open-Face Sandwiches

Coffee & Coffee Bread, Glögg & Pepparkakor (all day)

Gifts, Handcrafts, Imported Linens, Ornaments, Jewelry
Cards, Wrapping Paper, Candles, Candle Holders & Rings

Dala Horses, Straw Goats, Jul Tomtes (gnomes) etc.

VALKOMMEN!

BIRKA LODGE NO. 732 OF HAMILTON, MASSACHUSETTS

VASA ORDER OF AMERICA

Non-Profit Fraternal Benefit Association

WWW.Birka732.com



Christmas in Sweden



Around Christmas time in Sweden, one of the biggest celebrations is St. Lucia's Day (or St. Lucy's Day) on December 13th. The celebration comes from stories that were told by Monks who first brought Christianity to Sweden.

St Lucia was a young Christian girl who was martyred, killed for her faith, in 304AD. The most common story told about St Lucia is that she would secretly bring food to the persecuted Christians in Rome, who lived in hiding in the catacombs under the city. She would wear candles on her head so she had both her hands free to carry things. Lucy means 'light' so this is a very appropriate name.

December 13th was also the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year, in the [old 'Julian' Calendar](#) and a pagan festival of lights in Sweden was turned into St. Lucia's Day.

St. Lucia's Day is now celebrated by a girl dressing in a white dress with a red sash round her waist and a crown of candles on her head. Small children use electric candles but from about 12 years old, real candles are used!



#72880771 / [gettyimages.com](https://www.gettyimages.com)

The crown is made of Lingonberry branches which are evergreen and symbolise new life in winter. Schools normally have their own St. Lucia's and some town and villages also choose a girl to play St. Lucia in a procession where carols are sung.

A national Lucia is also chosen. Lucias also visit hospitals and old people's homes singing a song about St Lucia and handing out 'Pepparkakor', ginger snap biscuits.

Small children sometimes like dressing up as Lucia (with the help of their parents!). Also boys might dress up as 'Stjärngossar' (star boys) and girls might be 'tärnor' (like Lucia but without the candles).

A popular food eaten at St. Lucia's day are 'Lussekakts', St Lucia's day buns flavoured with saffron and dotted with raisins which are eaten for breakfast.

St Lucia's Day first became widely celebrated in Sweden in the late 1700s. St Lucia's Day is also celebrated in [Denmark](#), [Norway](#), [Finland](#), Bosnia, and Croatia. In Denmark it is more a of a children's day and in some part of Italy, children are told that St Lucy brings them presents. They leave out a sandwich for her and the donkey that helps carry the gifts!

Christmas Eve is also very important in Sweden. This is when the main meal (well really a feast!) is eaten.

This is often a 'julbord' which is a buffet, eaten at lunchtime. Cold fish is important on the julbord. There is often herring (served in many different ways), gravlax (salmon which has been cured in sugar, salt and dill) and smoked salmon.

Other dishes on the julbord might include cold meats including turkey, roast beef and 'julskinka' (a Christmas ham); cheeses, liver pate, salads, pickles and different types of bread and butter (or mayonnaise). There will also be warm savoury foods including meatballs, 'prinskorv' (sausages), 'koldomar' (meat stuffed cabbage rolls), jellied pigs' feet, lutfisk (a dried cod served with a thick white sauce) and 'revbenspjäll' (oven-roasted pork ribs). Vegetables such as potatoes and red cabbage will also be served. Another potato dish is 'Janssons Frestelse' (matchstick potatoes layered with cream, onion and anchovies that is baked to a golden brown). There's also 'dopp i grytan' which is bread that is dipped in the broth and juices that are left over after boiling the ham.

The desert of the julbord might be a selection of sweet pastries, some more pepparkakor biscuits and some home made sweets!

Wow, I think I like the sound of a Jolbord! To wash all that food down you can have some 'glogg' which is sweet mulled wine and some coffee to finish off the meal!



Another popular food at Christmas in Sweden is 'risgrynsgröt' (rice porridge that's eaten with 'hallonsylt' [raspberry jam] or sprinkled with some cinnamon). It's often eaten during the evening after people have exchanged their presents.

If there is any risgrynsgröt left over, when it's cold it can be mixed with whipped cream and eaten with a warm fruit sauce. This is called 'Ris a la malta' and sounds rather yummy!

Presents are normally exchanged on Christmas Eve. People often go to Church early on Christmas morning.

Another popular and important that many Swedes do on Christmas Eve afternoon is to watch Donald Duck! Every year, since 1959, at 3.00pm on Christmas Eve, the TV station TV1 shows the Disney special "From All of Us to All of You" or in Swedish it's "Kalle Anka och hans vänner önskar God Jul" meaning stop to watch it!

Families sometimes have goats made of straw in the house to guard the [Christmas Tree!](#) Straw is used as a decoration in homes, to remind them that Jesus was born in a manger. Christmas Tree decorations that are made of straw are also very popular. In the city of Gävle, a huge straw goat is built every year for the start of Advent. It takes two days to put up!

In Sweden, presents might be brought by Santa called 'Jultomten' or by gnomes/elves called 'Nissar' or 'Tomte'. They're called Nisse' in Norway.

The end of Christmas in Sweden is on January 13th (twenty days after Christmas) which is called 'Tjugondag Knut' (Twentieth Day Knut) or 'Tjugondag jul' (Twentieth Day Yule) and is named after a Danish prince called Canute Lavard. On Tjugondag Knut it's traditional that the Christmas Tree is taken down and and left over cookies and sweets are eaten!

In Swedish Happy/Merry Christmas is 'God Jul'

