

# BIRKA BANNER

Bi-Monthly Newsletter, Birka Lodge #732, Vasa Order of America  
[www.birka732.com](http://www.birka732.com)

**SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2011**

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## Chairman's Message

Greetings to all and welcome back from your summer vacations. I hope everyone enjoyed their vacations to travel, visit, relax and return refreshed. It is hard to believe that summer is over and it is time to plan the fall activities at Birka Lodge. As I am writing this message, I have just returned from a six week trip to Sweden and am recuperating from jet lag and a bad cold. Unfortunately, the weather was rainy and cool some of the time. I enjoyed visiting with all my cousins and friends and visited Halden, Norway and Copenhagen, Denmark.

I would like to thank the members of the June Refreshment Committee, Karin Caves, Matilda Halloran, Eva Ghika, Lisa Winsor, Ann-Marie Breuer, and Carol Landoni. Delicious strawberry shortcake was enjoyed by all. The first meeting for the fall will be held on **September 23** at 7:30 p.m. The program will be about the Swedish Glass District by Cultural Leader, Ann-Marie Breuer. An evening you won't want to miss! A great time to fellowship with Birka members. We will also be having the Delegates' Report from the District Convention and Birka's Convention Committee will have a report for the lodge.

On **Saturday, September 24**, Birka will be participating in the Hamilton Harvest Festival, to be held from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Please contact Ann-Marie Breuer if you would like to help with Birka Lodge's table.

The **October 28** meeting is our annual Halloween/Hexan's Potluck Supper at **6:30 p.m.** Everyone attending is asked to bring a main dish, salad or dessert. If your dish needs to be heated in the oven, please arrive between 6:00-6:15 p.m. We would like to begin at 6:30 p.m. The lodge will provide coffee and cold drinks. This has been a very successful event and we have some great cooks at the lodge. Dessert will be served following the meeting. **Costumes are encouraged.** Use your imagination. Children are welcome. Come in costume for the Potluck! Who knows who or what you'll meet!

At the September and October meetings, the sign up sheet for volunteers for the Christmas Fair, **November 26** at the **Community House** will be available. As always we will need help with set up the night before, clean up, publicity, booth help, etc. We will also need donations for grabs, home baked goods, etc. This is Birka Lodge's major fund raising event of the year and the support and help of all lodge members is needed to make this year's Christmas Fair as successful as in past years.

The next Activities Committee meeting will be held on Sunday, September 11 at 3:00 p.m. at the home of Andrea and Mike Swanson in Rowley. I encourage all officers and members to attend to help plan our Christmas Fair and upcoming events. Thank you to Ann-Marie Breuer for hosting the June 12 meeting. Also, thank you to the Convention Committee and the Program Book Coordinating Committee that have been working on the District Convention and Program Book while I have been in Sweden.

**Reminder:** Please notify Recording Secretary, Mrs. Judy Tanzer, 3 Anthony Road, Hamilton, MA 01982, telephone no. 978-468-7407, of any address changes. Thank you.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the **September 23** meeting and the Potluck Supper. Please mark the dates! Come and support your lodge and its officers. Happy Autumn! Welcome back!

In truth and unity,

Linda Christianson, PDM, Chairman

# Happy Birthday!

## SEPTEMBER

03 Edith Sanborn	14 Karin Caves
04 Michael Swanson	18 Naomi Gray
07 Warren E. Johnson	22 Nancy Sanford
10 Miriam Hooper	22 Sharon DeLacey
11 Lois Johnson	26 Susan Bagnulo

## OCTOBER

04 Eddie Thurnquist	20 Carolyn Bartlett
05 Rut Johnson	20 Joseph Birch
07 Vincent Ghika	21 Ed Johnson
15 Paul French	25 Karen Roman
17 Anita Adams	30 Robert Lewis
19 Sven Hyberts	

## REFRESHMENT COMMITTEES

### September 23- Meeting

Pamela Petronzio, Co-Chair  
Audrey DiPillo, Co-Chair  
Abigail Butt  
Naomi Gray  
Bill Ghen  
Richard Lilja  
Ron & Andrea Holmgren

### October 28 - Hexan's Potluck Supper

Janet Muller, Chair  
Eva Ghika  
Carolyn Bartlett  
Janet Dawe  
Linda Boylan  
Gus Blomgren

## SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 16-18 - District Convention

Sept. 23 - 7:30 pm meeting - Swedish Glass District

Oct. 28 - 6:30 p.m. -Hexan's Halloween Potluck

Nov. 26 - Christmas Jul Fair

## ...round the Lodge....

Congratulations to Joyce and Rich Lilja who will be celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary in October

Linda Christianson has just returned from a 6-week trip visiting relatives in Sweden.

We will be sponsoring a table at the Hamilton-Wenham Harvest Festival in front of the Black Crow on Sat. Sept. 24th from 9-2. A great chance to pick up some coffee bread from Crown Bakery.

## NEW MEMBERS



**Lisa Winsor**



**Marlys Mahajan**

Lisa grew up in Scituate, a suburb south of Boston. Her paternal grandfather came from a family of fishermen in Sweden. After coming to the United States, her grandfather and great uncles became ship builders and sailors.

After working for several years in Research and Development as a Chemical Engineer, Lisa earned her law degree. She currently works for a medical device manufacturer, Covidien, in the intellectual property law group.

Lisa has two sons, Michael (age 17) and Thomas (age 15). In her spare time she enjoys knitting and singing.

Marlys is really happy to be reconnecting with her Swedish roots. She has three grandparents that emigrated from Smaland in the late 1880's. Both her parents grew up near Scandia, Minnesota, the earliest Swedish settlement in Minnesota.

Marlys and her husband moved to Essex County 40 years ago for his job at Gillette. She was busy raising two boys and then working full time. She is now semi retired from her job as a textbook editor for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and looking forward to being a Grandma and playing a more active role in the community and Birka Lodge.



**Charles Hawkes**

Charles Hawkes of Hamilton passed away at home on May 21, 2011 following a brave battle with cancer. He was the loving husband of Mary Ann C. (French) with whom he shared 59 years of marriage.

Born in Lynn, he was a retired Naval Architect from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. He also worked at the former Boston Naval Shipyard. He graduated from Wentworth Institute in Boston. He was a member of the American Legion as well as Birka Lodge in Hamilton. He was an avid gardener and enjoyed skiing, sailing and spending time with family as well as his beloved cats. He served his country as a Staff Sergeant in the Air Force during the Korean conflict.

He will be missed by all who knew him. He is survived by his sons Eric S. and his wife Amy of Portland and Gregory V. and his wife Penny of Beverly. He cherished his grandchildren Tara E. and Oscar P. Hawkes.

Services were private for family only. Donations may be made in his name to the Birka Lodge.

## TRACING SWEDISH ROOTS

Between 1867 and 1929 some 1.2 million Swedes immigrated to the United States. All told, one out of every five Swedes departed for America, a percentage exceeded only by Irish and Norwegian immigrants. Factors, including available farmland and higher working wages in the region, drew most Swedes to the upper Midwest states of Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois. At one point, Chicago was the second largest "city of Swedes" after Stockholm. Mass Swedish immigration to the United States ended when the stock market crashed in 1929. During the following years and throughout the Depression, many Swedes returned home.

The first step is to find out as much information as you can about your Swedish ancestor that you wish to research. You will need your ancestor's name, parish where your ancestor lived and a date such as birth, marriage, and death or emigration date. If you have

this information, you can research using Genline's Swedish Church Records archive.

## A GOOD LOOK BACK

If you are like me and many Americans of this day and age, you most likely have a rather sketchy grasp of your ethnic heritage and the history of their immigration to America. We tend to look forward and don't often look back. When we do it is usually fascinating. Recently I decided to look back at the history of how the Swedes came to America. I wanted to read it in story format, maybe even fiction but not encyclopedic-like history full of facts. I found just what I wanted in Vilhelm Moberg's four-book series called "The Emigrants."

The story is set between 1850 and 1900, a period when Swedes left the homeland for America in vast numbers. He tells the story of 16 Swedes who left the poor rural area of southern Sweden called Smaland. They traveled by wagon, ship, train, barge, and by foot all the way to Minnesota territory to settle in the vast prairie. Considerable portions of the books are about the various parts of the trip. The seemingly never ending Atlantic ocean with their health issues, language problems, seasickness, and their ignorance of the greater world was truly humorous at times but was such an incredible hardship. Moberg created many interesting scenerios during the different stages of their trip, which made for very entertaining reading.

The main characters in the book are Karl and Kristina Nilsson and their growing family who purchase land under the homestead act and farm the land which eventually becomes part of a growing Swedish community. The books take the reader beyond the first generation to a limited extent. In doing so, the reader gets the clear sense of how America changed and grew so rapidly. Reading this depiction of the early settlers of our country gave me great appreciation of the profound challenges they faced and how so many persevered and overcame whatever was before them.

One of the things that stay with me after reading the books is how effectively Moberg gave the reader a real sense of the complex emotions of leaving family, friends, their home and everything they knew. He did this in clever ways throughout the book such as the special variety of apple tree that was sent from Sweden and adorned the entry of the Nilsson home in America. It was a constant reminder of home for Kristina. The homesickness never ended for her while Karl never looked back. I am glad that I looked back at this history. I recommend "The Emigrants" for any Swedish American. In addition to knowing more of the story I think I know more about myself.

*Contributed by Ron Holmgren, Birka member*



CONVENTION COMMITTEE

1st Row- Andrea Swanson, Sue Bagnulo, Helen Riddle,  
Carol Landoni, Judy Tanzer  
2nd Row- Mike Swanson, Linda Christianson, Lois  
Johnson, Denise Esperson, Gus Blomgren, Mike Bagnulo,  
Linda Boylan, Ed Johnson, Ann-Marie Breuer

BIRKA LODGE DELEGATES

Gus Blomgren, June Guidara Abigail Butt  
Alternates: Eva Ghika, Sharon Guidara

**BIRKA BANNER**

Birka Lodge #732  
Vasa Order of America

Lois Johnson, Editor  
51 Pickman Rd.  
Beverly, MA 01915

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**DISTRICT #2 V.O.A.**

**110TH CONVENTION**

**HOSTED BY BIRKA LODGE # 732**

*SEPTEMBER 16, 17 & 18, 2011*

PEABODY MARRIOTT  
Centennial Drive, Peabody

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**FIRST CLASS**

