Nordland Heritage Foundation Welcomes New Executive Director

The Nordland Heritage Foundation is pleased to announce that Brian Kaatz has accepted the position of executive director as of January 1, 2015.

As executive director, Brian has proposed several goals. He would like to develop closer relationships with other like-minded organizations such as Sons of Norway, Norse Federation, and the Norwegian men’s singing societies as well as area schools, churches and historical societies. He suggests we aim to enhance the relationship of Heritage Park with Augustana College and engage more vigorously Augustana College students and faculty.

He will work to expand membership in the Foundation and promote the Foundation and the Park via multiple public relations techniques. He suggests that we expand visitation hours and formalize the docent program as well as maximize the Park as a venue for weddings and/or receptions.

Kaatz is trained as a pharmacist and has taught pharmacy at South Dakota State University. During his last six years at SDSU he was the dean of the College of Pharmacy. In the last years before retirement he held a similar position at the University of South Dakota.

Kaatz comes as the third executive director of the Foundation. When the organization was formed in 1979 Arthur Huseboe was named president and later executive director. When Huseboe’s health failed, Arthur Olsen took over the reins until his death in May, 2014. Brian has broad administrative experience, a deep interest in history and a strong appreciation for heritage.

Some of Brian’s proposed goals are short-term but others can be viewed as long-term plans. The Board has agreed to give him an annual stipend to work on these activities. Watch for developments as Nordland Heritage Foundation moves into a new, exciting future.

ROLVAAG HISTORIC MARKER

There is a historic marker designating the area where author Ole E. Rolvaag spent his first three formative years in America and it is located along the highway near Elk Point, SD.

Rolvaag was born on a windswept island of Norway near the Arctic Circle where his future seemed destined to be in the fishing industry. A family friend offered to buy a fine quality fishing boat for him. Rolvaag would be the skipper and he could eventually reimburse the friend for the cost of the boat. It was a tempting opportunity, but Rolvaag’s heart was not in the fishing industry and he felt he had to pursue other dreams.

So he ventured out, choosing to immigrate to America. He had an advantage over some because he had an uncle on a farm near Elk Point, SD. He did not find farm life any more fulfilling than the fishing
Rolvaag Family Photo Collection

The Rolvaag family very generously has given a collection of family photographs taken at the Rolvaag Writing Cabin over the years when it was the center of family summer activity.

The cabin, located on Big Island Lake near Marcel, Minnesota, was primitive, but nevertheless was a favorite gathering place for family and friends. There was no electricity (and no automatic flash cameras!) so most of the pictures show an outdoor setting. The cabin itself is small and sparsely furnished, primarily with furniture made by Ole Rolvaag himself. There is no evidence of lounge chairs outside, rather the picnickers are seated on the ground. We learn from the photos that swimming was a favorite activity, but king of the cabin sports was clearly fishing. There are numerous shots of Ole Rolvaag, his wife Jennie Berdahl Rolvaag and son Karl Rolvaag and others holding the prize catch of the day.

In the cabin there is a large collection of wax mold recordings of a wide variety of music. Sadly, the gramophone on which to play them no longer exists. We are told that when Jennie wanted Ole to quit fishing and come in for dinner she played one of the recordings so that the music would waft over the lake and Ole would hear and know that supper was waiting.

Here is a sampling of the photos. More photos can be viewed in the cabin.

NHF ANNUAL MEETING JUNE 7

Everyone interested in heritage is invited to the public annual meeting of the Nordland Heritage Foundation. It will be held this year at 12:00 noon on Sunday, June 7 in the 3-in-1 room of the Morrison Commons building on the Augustana campus. The meeting will begin with a buffet brunch followed by a brief business meeting. The speaker will be the new executive director of NHF Brian Kaatz, who will share his exciting plans for the future of the Foundation and Heritage Park. Special music will be provided by Deanna Wehrspann and Mary Beth Anderson.

Reservations are required and can be made by calling Bill Westerdahl at 338-5160. The price for the brunch is $10.

Prior to the annual meeting, the annual worship service in the Beaver Creek Church will begin at 10:30 a.m. The Rev. Jim Christopherson will conduct the service based on the traditional liturgy in the Concordia hymn book and will preach the sermon. Beverly Hallstrom will be the pianist and special music will be provided by Ron and Martha Rossing. All are welcome.
MEMBERSHIP BARGAIN IN NEW FINANCIAL YEAR STRUCTURE

Many years ago the NHF Board of Directors determined the financial year for the organization would begin on May 17, in honor of Syttende Mai (17th of May) the Norwegian Constitution Day, which is Norway’s most prominent national holiday.

Recently the executive committee of the NHF Board decided that May 17 was not a very workable membership deadline and voted to change the financial year to begin January 1. This will go into effect January 1, 2017. Therefore, when you send your current dues for May 17, 2015, your membership will be good for a year and a half, until January, 2017. Basic membership is only $25. This is a bargain for a 12-month term but this time it will cover your membership for 20-plus months!

Of course, we welcome memberships at a higher amount. You can be a Contributor for $50, a Donor for $100, a Sponsor for $250 or a Viking for a gift above $250.

Large gifts are deposited in the Heritage Park endowment fund. When the Berdahl/Rolvaag House was given to the college, Clarence Berdahl gave a generous gift for the refurbishing and maintenance of it. Anna Berdahl added to this fund and these money established the endowment fund which has supported the house and the Heritage Park and its additional buildings.

Memberships alone do not suffice when a building needs a new roof or other extensive maintenance. Thus, we invite you to become a member or renew your membership at the current bargain rate but also to consider a larger gift to add to the endowment fund to support the park, a heritage treasure.

ADDITIONS TO HERITAGE PARK?

In cooperation with Augustana’s exciting construction project of the Froiland Science Complex, Nordland Heritage Foundation Board has agreed to allow parking for several related materials and vehicles next to the Beaver Creek Church. Parking on 33rd Street or in the parkings lots was not an option. These items are not heritage buildings nor do they add to the prairie/woodland ambiance. However, they are temporary and we are happy to help in this way.

News from other heritage organizations

NORSE FEDERATION

The Norse Federation is a worldwide organization which promotes solidarity between Norway and Norwegians abroad. The local chapter met Tuesday, May 12, 2015 in the 3-in-1 room of Augustana College Morrison Commons. The program began at 5:30 p.m. The featured guest was Dr. Russell Svenningsen of Augustana’s music department. Dr. Svenningsen wrote his dissertation on the Norwegian Singers Association of North America.

NORSE GLEE CLUB

The Norse Glee Club recently sang at the funeral of one of their long-time members, Glen Eliason. Glen is survived by his wife, Muriel, who accompanied the Glee Club for many years. Norse Glee Club sang the Star Spangled Banner at the Canary baseball game on Sunday, April 19 and at the penitentiary on May 7. The Glee Club will participate in the Sioux Valley Sangerfest in Sioux City on June 13.

MINNEHAHA MANDSKOR

Mandskor recently sang at Edgebrook Care Center in Edgerton, MN. On June 13 they will join with other choruses in the area for the Sioux Valley Sangerfest. Member Bill Hoffman represented the Mandskor in the annual Gourmet Guys fundraiser at Active Generations. He prepared rommegrot, with amaretto as a special ingredient. Those who tried it wondered why Norwegians didn’t think of this long ago! They will have a summer picnic/potluck in July and have their annual booth at the Sioux Empire Fair.

continued on the side panel

SONS OF NORWAY

Sons of Norway held their memorial service at 7:00 p.m. on May 14 at Nordic Hall honoring those members who died during the past year. The co-presidents are encouraging Sons of Norway members to be active participants in Augustana Heritage Park by touring the buildings this summer and leading tours! They are also planning a bus trip to Dalesburg Lutheran Church on Friday, June 19 to attend the Midsommer celebration and including the smorgasbord supper. The bus trip will cost $12.50, the smorgasbord is $12.00. If you are interested in this event contact Becky Ellis at 336-7585 or 940-1236.

Rolvaag Historic Marker continued

industry, but this was a place to begin his adventure in a new land. Eventually, he was able to enroll in the Augustana Academy in Canton, SD and here he found the intellectual stimulation that he had been craving. It was also where he met his future wife, Jennie Berdahl.

Although agriculture was not to be his career, the three years he spent on the Elk Point farm served him well. He began his experience with the English language, and learned the contour of South Dakota land and discovered information about the Native Americans. His life on the farm became fodder for his early novel, The Third Life of Per Smørvik. He wrote this in the form of letters from a young man, recently arrived in America, to his family in Norway. In this book he relates the embarrassing experience of being required to do women’s chores, such as milking the cows! The novel is considered to be largely autobiographical.

As a Rolvaag fan you will want to see this marker. From Sioux Falls, drive south on I-29 to Exit 26, (Vermillion exit) and turn left onto Highway 50. Continue about six miles where you will find the road curves toward the south. Just past this curve (labeled Highway 11) you will see the marker on the east side. The farm where Rolvaag lived and worked those first years in America is about two miles north of this point.
Yes!

I want to join Nordland Heritage Foundation and support its work of preserving heritage.

NAME ______________________________________________________________________________________________________

ADDRESS ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

ZIP ______________________________ TELEPHONE ________________________________________________________________

Enclosed is a check for: _____ $25 Basic _____ $50 Contributor _____ $100 Donor _____ $250 Sponsor _____ over $250 Viking

Annual membership dues include an individual or a couple.

Send to Nordland Heritage Foundation
Augustana College
Box 735
2001 S. Summit Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57197

• The Nordlander is the news publication for the Nordland Heritage Foundation. This organization was founded in 1977 and maintains the historic buildings in Heritage Park and makes them available to the public.

• Mark your calendar for the Annual Meeting of Nordland Heritage Foundation in June 7th of 2015.

• The four historic buildings are open for touring on Sunday afternoons from 2:00 to 4:00, during the summer. Special tours can be arranged for school groups or other interested parties during the year. Call (605) 338-1291 or (605) 338-6372. The park is open all year.