

Swedish Roots in Oregon

An Immigration Research Project



December 2011 Newsletter

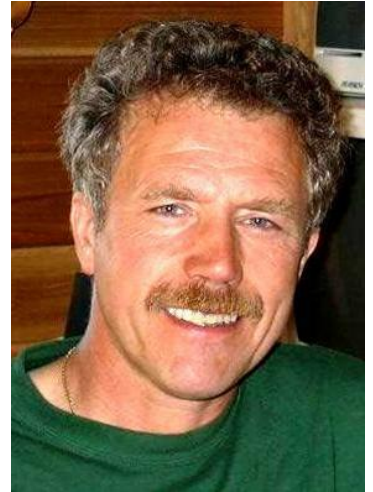
Editor: Leif Rosqvist

Volume 24

Message from the President - Lars Nordström

Dear friends and readers, as Thanksgiving and Christmas appears on the horizon, it is once again time to review the recent activities SRIO. As always, it has been a busy and productive six months.

We have continued to promote our second book, *Ten New Lives: Swedes in the Pacific Northwest*, which was published in March of this year. This summer the book travelled to the 3rd Annual NW Book Fair in Portland and to the Yamhill County Historical Society Harvest Festival outside McMinnville, and this fall I have spoken on the subject of recent Swedish immigration to the Pacific Northwest at the Scandinavian Heritage Foundation Lecture Series as well as at the Cathlamet public library. The Multnomah County Library System also made a generous purchase of about two dozen books for all its metropolitan branch libraries, so we are happy that the book has continued to find new readers.



At the end of the summer, SRIO was able to publish its first Swedish-American wall calendar. It is bilingual and lists all major American and Swedish holidays. The artist whose work is featured on the calendar is Olof Grafström. Unfortunately, very few people know anything about this wonderful artist. In 1886 Grafström emigrated directly from Stockholm to Portland, Oregon, and became a resident of the city until 1890. During Grafström's years in Portland, he became a close friend of Ernst Skarstedt, who had arrived a year earlier. When Skarstedt's wife Anna suddenly died, Olof Grafström was asked to help illustrate the book Ernst Skarstedt wanted to write about the couple's life in America. It is from the book *Vid hennes sida* [By her side](1890), that these drawing have been reproduced. You can read more about the artist elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Ingeborg Dean has continued working diligently on the SRIO oral history project and is making wonderful progress. It is our goal to record a rich variety of voices and stories of Swedish immigrants and their children in Oregon during the 20th century, and then publish the results as a book. All oral history work in painstakingly slow. At least one interview must be done, sometimes two, and the interview must then be transcribed, corrected and edited before it can be made readable.

Our Webmaster Herje Wikegård has recently made an exciting addition to the SRIO website – safe and secure credit card payments through PayPal for all our publications, including the wall calendar. It is also possible to make a small donation using PayPal to support our efforts to make the Swedish history of Oregon better known.

(Con't page 2)

In addition, Ann Stuller has been busy designing a great logo for SRIO – a winding emigrant road leading to the fir trees of Oregon. It will now appear on all our publications, including our website, brochures, business cards and everything else that we do. Check it out in this Newsletter!

One of the greatest challenges of SRIO over the last five years has been trying to find a way to transform our old genealogical database of immigrant Swedes into an easily accessible format on our website. The goal is to have every website visitor be able to search the database for family members. Much money and effort has been poured into this effort over the years, and we are finally hopeful that a large nation-wide genealogical database effort might bring us along as well. In short, we have reason to believe that 2012 will actually be the year when all that material finally becomes available.

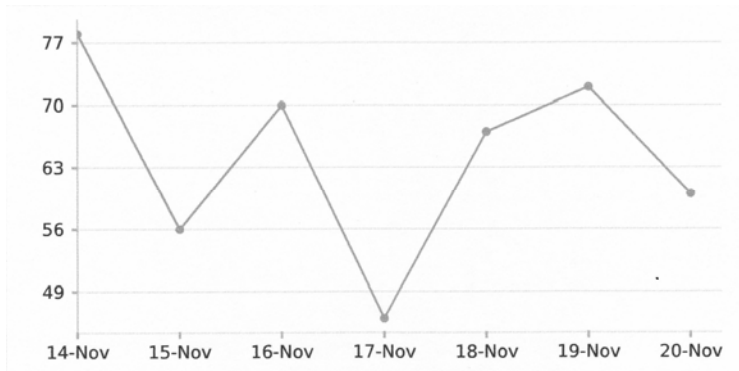
As usual, SRIO will have a table at the ScanFair celebrations at the Memorial Coliseum in Portland, December 3 & 4. We look forward to seeing you there.

God Jul och Gott Nytt År!

SRIO Website is much visited!

Our website continue to show large traffic of people visiting our website for information.

Below is an example report for the week 14-Nov-2011 to 20-Nov-2011



Day of the week	Date	Visits
Monday	14-Nov-11	78
Tuesday	15-Nov-11	56
Wednesday	16-Nov-11	70
Thursday	17-Nov-11	46
Friday	18-Nov-11	67
Saturday	19-Nov-11	72
Sunday	20-Nov-11	60
Total		449
Averages		64

SRIO new logo!

Here is the new SRIO logo, as part of the branding strategy assuring that everybody immediately knows that this is SRIO they are dealing with.



SRIO at Oaks Park Scandinavian Midsummer, by Ingeborg Dean

Midsummer celebrations have deep Swedish roots in Oregon. They began in 1889 at the site where Oaks Park was later built, and at that time the festival goers came by ferry and steam boat. Over the years the location for the festivities has changed several times. A favorite site was Viking Park at the foot of Stark Street Bridge. Up to 5,000 Swedes would gather there until the early 1940's to dance around the maypole and, at night, under the tall trees, to eat, drink and play bingo in the company of fellow immigrants. Until about 1939 a Midsummer Queen would be chosen among the beautiful young women, who belonged to the various organizations of Swedish Portland. The winner would wear a long, dark blue velvet robe over her Midsummer dress and a crown of white beads. A garland or a bouquet of fresh flowers would complete her royal outfit.



Midsummer Queen, 1916

When WWII came and gas was rationed, the closer-in Oaks Park was chosen again for the celebrations. The park served the Swedes well, but later some other sites were chosen, such as Columbia Park and Banks. In 1980, following the Mt. St. Helens eruption, Midsummer celebrations had to be cancelled because of the wide spread ash cover. For many years, the beautiful Cedarville Park was used. Recently, Midsummer observances, now a joint Nordic celebration of the season, have been held at the German-American Cultural Center on SE Division Street in Portland. However, due to a planned site development, in 2011 the Scandinavians had to choose another venue for their summer celebration, and they decided to return to Oaks Park.


SRIO, Swedish Roots in Oregon, participated and, as usual, there was great interest in the organization's work and its publications, which sold well. The large map of Sweden caught the interest of many looking to pinpoint their Swedish roots. One man, wanting to research his Swedish ancestry, had only his common Swedish last name to go on and asked for advice. Another Swedish descendant is getting help from an SRIO member with text in an old family photo album.




SRIO at Oaks Park, 2011

New 2012 Wall Calendar

SRIO's first Wall Calendar is now available to order. Each month has a drawing by Portland Resident Swedish Artist Olof Grafström. Visit our website to order!





Grafström portrait by
Anders Zorn, ca 1880


**DRAWINGS BY
SWEDISH ARTIST
OLOF GRAFSTRÖM
PORTLAND RESIDENT
1886 - 1890**

Olof Grafström (1855 – 1933) was born in Attmar, Medelpad, the son of a well-to-do farmer. In 1875 he was admitted to the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm, where he became a protégé of Per Daniel Holm and was considered one of his most promising students. He graduated in 1882 as an accomplished landscape painter. During his years at the academy Grafström was a contemporary and friend of Swedish artists such as Anders Zorn, Bruno Liljefors, Richard Berg, and Johan Tirén. He went on a summer tramping adventure in north-central Sweden with Anders Zorn in 1880, and the following summer visited the Oviken Mountains in Jämtland with Johan Tirén. He also spent time around Torneå and Luleå in Swedish Lapland. He exhibited during his student years, and a motif from Lapland was purchased by King Oscar II.

Olof Grafström immigrated to the United States in June 1886, travelling directly to Portland, Oregon. The following year he met—and became a close friend of—the Swedish-American journalist and pioneer Ernst Skarstedt who had arrived a year earlier. In 1887, at the city's Mechanics' Fair, Grafström's painting *A reindeer scene in Lapland*, won a "Grand Silver Medal" and secured his standing as one of Portland's leading local artists. Numerous commissions and sales followed for the productive artist, including work as a fresco painter. Unfortunately, none of Grafström's Portland murals have survived. In September 1888 Ernst Skarstedt's wife suddenly died of typhoid fever, and when Skarstedt started writing a book about their life together, Olof Grafström contributed most of the illustrations. Grafström was also a contributor to Skarstedt's later volume *Vagabond och redaktör* (1914) [Vagabond and editor].

In June 1890, after a four-year residency, Olof Grafström left the city of roses and moved to Spokane Falls, as it was named at the time. Then, in 1893, after spending some time in California, he accepted a teaching position at the art department at Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas. He remained at Bethany College until 1897, when he moved to Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. He taught there until 1926. Throughout his teaching career Grafström continued as a landscape painter, and he also painted about two hundred altar paintings for Lutheran churches across America. In 1928 Olof Grafström returned to Sweden and settled in his native province of Medelpad. He died in Stockholm in 1933.

The whereabouts of the original drawings used in Skarstedt's holograph *Vid hennes sida* (1890) are, as far as we know, unknown. All the images reproduced in this calendar are digitally restored from the book, and the traces of the double reproduction process remind us of the fact that they are indeed copies of copies. Four drawings have been published previously in *Swedish Oregon* (2008), compiled and edited by Lars Nordström.



www.SwedishRootsInOregon.org

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The SRIO Web site will now accept on-line orders and donations.

The SRIO web site now has a new central Order page where you can add the SRIO books and Wall Calendar to an on-line shopping cart. The actual transaction takes place on secure pages hosted by PayPal. This enables VISA and other credit card payments, as well as transfers from other PayPal accounts. The payment goes into SRIO's new PayPal account and we will ship the product when PayPal notifies us about the order and the shipping address. The old way of printing out a form and mailing it in with a check is still available on that same Order page, but we are very excited about this more convenient on-line way of ordering our calendar and books. For donations we will send a "Thank You" confirmation. We are a 501(c) (3) compliant non-profit organization.

Herje Wikegård,
SRIO Webmaster