

**Old Trondhjem News**  
**Trondhjem Community Preservation Society**  
**P.O. Box 259, Lonsdale, MN 55046**

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# **Trondhjem Community Preservation Society**

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APRIL, 2009

TRONDHJEM COMMUNITY PRESERVATION SOCIETY P.O. BOX 259  
[www.trondhjempreservation.org](http://www.trondhjempreservation.org)

LONSDALE, MINNESOTA 55046

## Historic Trondhjem: Telling a Story, Preserving a Treasure

### Syttende Mai Celebration on the Actual Day

Everyone is invited to come to the Historic Church on May 17 at 2:00 PM to celebrate Syttende Mai featuring The Lost Norwegians. They are a local group that specializes in Norwegian songs and humor. The group was started by the late Lee Fossum. Currently its members include John Fossum, son of Lee and Carol Fossum, and Joel Quinnell, son of the late Eldon "Hunts" and Betty Quinnell, all descendents of the original Trondhjem Community. Another member, Lola Fick, is a current member of Trondhjem Church. Also singing with the group are Margaret O'Leary, Mancel Mitchell, Bonnie Jean Flom, and Kris Paulson. Syttende Mai is the Norwegian National Day that celebrates the writing of the constitution and declared independence from Sweden.

The annual meeting of the Trondhjem Community Preservation Society will be held and a full table of Norske goodies will be served following the program. There is no charge and a free will offering will be taken to support the work of preserving the building. We ask that those who are able bring their special Norwegian Foods to add to the serving table during fellowship after the program.

### A Note from the President

We've had a colder winter here on the Trondhjem hill than we are used to so spring's arrival is very welcome. The snow piled up and Rob Horejsi did a wonderful job of clearing the snow when needed for the Christmas Concert, family reunions and wedding events. The building is in good condition and available for rentals throughout the year.

Your board of directors (Dallas Berg, John Fossum, Merle Fossum, Millie Johnson, Bonnie Pavek, Ramona Pumper, Deb Simon, Sandy Valek, and Mark Ward) has been busy planning the year ahead

at Old Trondhjem. We have attractive events planned for Syttende Mai, the Ice Cream Social on July 26<sup>th</sup> from 12 to 4:00 PM with music by the "Mowin' Weeds" and the Christmas Concert December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 PM with the Minneapolis Apollo Male Chorus. Through these three celebrations each year hundreds of people show up for a good time and help us raise funds to continue the care and maintenance of this unique historic site. Many others contribute to honor a friend or remember a loved one and to add to our capital campaign.

Our organization functions totally on the work of volunteers. Many of you volunteer to work at the special events, bake food for the bake sale, help with the care and upkeep of the building, prepare the mailings for newsletters, and work on the museum development. Speaking of the museum; about nine or ten people on the museum committee gather for a half-day once or twice a month to create an exhibit telling the story of the old Trondhjem community and church. They have great fun in the process looking at old pictures, as they catalogue, care for, and preserve them and write the history of early times in Webster, Little Chicago, Union Lake, Lonsdale and Trondhjem. Be sure to look at these displays when you next visit the old church. The group never fails to stop for a lunch break with Papa Murphy's pizza. If you would like to volunteer to join the group, contact Joyce Pflaum at 651-423-5857 or email her at [joycep651@cs.com](mailto:joycep651@cs.com).

### News & Notes from the Museum & Historical Committee, by Joyce Pflaum

WHO SEZ? I would like to start a new column but I need YOUR help. This item would report your memories or stories. Please submit them to Joyce Pflaum at the TCPS address on this Newsletter. Do this today; I will use them as space permits.

The memory for this Newsletter is:

“STANLEY SEZ”;

My uncle Stanley Nelson always has many stories to tell. Stanley was born October 13, 1914, in the Little Chicago area to Oscar and Emma (Rapp) Nelson. There were six children in the family: Asora (Duffy), Austin, Annie (Amundson), Christ, Stanley, and Harriet (Jacobson). My Uncle Stanley remembers the threshing days. Knute Rudy, a Union Lake area resident, owned a steam engine and grain separator (Threshing Machine). Oscar Nelson helped move the rig from one farm to another to thresh grain. Oscar was the “separator man” as he ran the machine, kept it oiled, greased, changed belts, and did whatever he needed to keep it running properly. Albin Gunderson was the “engineer” of the steam engine, as he had to keep water in the tank, and shovel wood or coal to keep the engine going. They would drive the rig down the road and as they neared the next farm they would blow the engine whistle so the farmer would know they were coming. They did what was called “stack threshing”. The farmers prepared for this day by making 4 large stacks of grain bundles, which were placed in a square. The steam engine would pull the separator in between the 4 stacks, unhook it, and then the steam engine would drive around to the back and hook onto the separator to provide power for threshing.

The movable wings on the side of the separator would be spread out toward the front stacks, and later to the back stacks. Two men would pitch bundles into the wings and the bundles would be carried by a chain belt into the separator. The straw would be blown into a straw stack and the grain was separated from the straw and carried by a feeder to a grain wagon. Of course the big events of any threshing day were the coffee breaks and the big dinner cooked by the farmer’s wife.

Len Friedges was the barber in Webster for many years. His shop was the gathering place for all the area men. Stanley remembers going there in the 1930’s (his courting years) every two weeks for a

hair trim that cost him 10 cents. That was cheaper than going once a month for a haircut that cost him 25 cents.

A LETTER TO OLE:

It has been a while since I have included a letter written to Ole B. Berg while he served in World War I. Ole was stationed at Camp Upton, NY at the time this letter was written. His overseas duty was spent in France. This letter was written to him by a young Trondhjem girl, Olga Skauge; it is dated May 7, 1918.

*Dear Ole,*

*I believe it is high time I am answering your welcome and interesting letter. I understand you have moved again. The people out there must like to keep you going.*

*Your Dad was over here Sunday. He was pretty well, but I guess he and your mother have both had a cold.*

*Papa has not been well for some time. He went to the city and had all his teeth pulled and since has not been well. We had the doctor out the other evening and he got orders to stay in bed for a while. Sadie won’t be through school until the first of June. Inga is still in the city, but she is coming home for Sadie’s graduation. They are both going to be working in the city this summer.*

*It is not so awfully quiet around here now, there are more young folks around than there were a few years ago. We had a picnic down by the school house last Friday. Had a nice time. Paul and I were out to Johnson’s in the evening. We got home about twelve. Sadie got in at 4 o’clock in the morning, she had been to a basket social in Millersburg.*

*You remember Louie Docken, brother to Ole Docken, he is in France now with the aviation Corps. I guess most of the boys around here are let off till in the fall on account of farm work. At least Tom Walstad is. Orrville Johnson speaks of enlisting in the fall.*

*Have you had any pictures taken yet? Be sure to remember us with some. We are anxious to see how you look as a soldier.*

*We are expecting a wedding to come off in this neighborhood soon, Richard Halvorson and Thea Lavanger. Guess they are going off to live on Ole Matson's or T. Wilby's place.*

*Oscar Anseth is building right across from Ole Docken's mail box (if you remember where that is) on top of the hill.*

*Harry Matson has had an operation. Guess he is quite sick.*

*I expect to be confirmed soon. Wish you could be here, but don't think you will miss much. I'll get all rattled and not be able to answer the one question.*

*Well, Ole, I guess I have written about all there is to write about so will close. The folks send their Best Wishes and Regards to you.*

*Sincerely, Your friend, Olga*

**WE WANT YOUR STORIES AND WE WANT YOU!** Please see me or Millie Johnson about helping on the museum committee. NO experience needed! Send us your family stories!

### **My Reflections on Trondhjem Church, Carol Johnson**

*Pastor Howard White met with longtime members of Trondhjem on April 24, 2007 to reminisce about the past. Carol Johnson came prepared with pages of handwritten memories. The following is the typed version:*

I joined Trondhjem when Floyd and I were married in 1941. At that time there was a potbellied stove in the front of the "old" church, near the door that goes into the fellowship hall. Anyone who had to sit behind the stove could only see the pulpit and the piano. The first pump organ was still there but not used. It was sold, but we now have it back. We had a beautiful tin ceiling with designs. But because the building was not heated when not in use, it kept peeling and had to be painted often. It was in the early 1950s we covered the ceiling, so we didn't have to deal with the peeling paint. Another ceiling was put in and walls were covered with some kind

of fiber wood. I'm sure Gale Hellerud remembers, as well as any of us, how bad the acoustics were. Pa Johnson, Ted Johnson, John Fossum, and Bennie Johnson dug out the basement under the church by hand, so a furnace could be put in. Trondhjem was once quite a large congregation. Then people began to move to Canada and other places to homestead. Many sold their farms to the Czech people. Some retired and moved to Northfield and other places. I remember Floyd's mother telling that when the Czech people moved in the kids were afraid of them. They would hide. Little did they know that their future children would be marrying into the Czech families. I know a lot of them came knocking at our door and we love them all! The Norwegians got to be good friends with their Czech neighbors.

Trondhjem Church kept getting smaller. We had a lot of Trondhjem boys serving in World War II. Almost every family had a son serving. Ted and Helga Johnson had 3. Several had 2 boys. I remember when we closed our services we would sing, "God bless Our Boys on Land in Air and Sea." It was sung to the tune of "Abide with Me." It was in the back of the hymnals. I'm sorry I've forgotten the words.

We had an outhouse, which was used until the 1970s when the fellowship hall was built. Of course, the outhouse had a Montgomery Ward or Sears catalog instead of toilet paper. In the summer at canning time we had the luxury of wrappers from peaches and pears. We bought by the crates in those days. It was no fun to take the little kids out there in the winter. It seemed as if there was always someone who had to – go! When the fellowship hall was built and restrooms were installed, we tore the outhouse down. Little did we realize – some day we would be sorry!

We had Ladies Aid in our homes. Pastor would lead the Bible Study. We would have our business meeting after a music solo or group singing, if there was a piano. And of course, piano or not, we would all sing. We always had a lovely lunch. Friends

also joined us. We helped to support the missions and expenses of the church. There wasn't much money during the Depression and even after, but we always seemed to pull through.

We always had our Christmas program on December 26<sup>th</sup>. We called it the 2<sup>nd</sup> Christmas Day. That was a holiday in Norway. I'm sure that's why they chose that day. My husband, Floyd, was the first one to put lights on the Christmas tree. He used a car battery. When one light went out, they all did! It was hard to find the faulty bulb so we could replace it. Floyd told me he remembered Olla Fossum, who didn't know he was going to put lights on the tree. She threw up her arms in delight, and I'm sure everyone else did too, as they always had candles on the tree, with a pail of water nearby. Christmas trees were different in those days. Branches were sparse. Candles were on the tips of the branches.

With only 7 kids and later about 15 for our Sunday School Christmas program, the adult choir helped out. They sat in front on both sides of the altar where the tree was. The kids always did a great job, learning recitations by heart, and many songs. It is amazing how much memory work they did. It was always so beautiful, and with so few kids. They were always so special to these people. They got a lot of attention and love. The kids were given bags of hard candy and peanuts. There was always a chocolate gum drop too and a large red shiny apple!

We had so few kids but our Sunday School was very active. Teachers were so very dedicated. They supported missions, did a lot of memory work and learned a lot of Bible verses. The teachers also taught the Catechism. They had classes here and there in the church, even in a closet. When we bought the school house below the hill, it was used for Bible school. Auctions started to be held there, not in homes anymore. Lunches were served there after funerals and many other functions. I remember Bertha Fossum was always in charge of the coffee. She made it in a big coffee pot on a

kerosene stove with an egg in it. This made the coffee clear.

I remember when there were 7 kids in Sunday School. five were Floyd's and mine, and two were Ray and Elvah Fossum's. Then Harold and Ida Madson moved in and joined the church. They had 6 little girls. Later, Peter and Joyce Madson joined. Now we really were a big Sunday School! The kids always went to Bible camp at Lake Wapo. It was very rustic. We would sweep down spider webs before the kids moved in. Often they were bit by spiders. Each cabin had a Bible name. I remember Nazareth and Salem. Now Camp Wapo has grown and is very modernized.

In the 1950s we were down to about 58 members, including the kids. The Synod wanted us to close. Rev. Ronning was our pastor and thanks to him we stayed opened. He told the Synod that every Sunday there was at least 98 to 99% attendance from the congregation. But most of the time there was 100%. I know God had a hand in that. He knew Trondhjem's future. And what do you know – we started to grow until we grew out of our little church on the hill. There are still some people here today, that belonged to the Old Historic Church.

Denny & Gale Hellerud found us, and bless their hearts. Now we had a regular choir, not just at Christmas. We were so grateful for all those wonderful people that joined us, helped us make a church home for so many people that are seeking a church home to raise their family.

**Visit our website at**  
**[www.trondhjempreservation.org](http://www.trondhjempreservation.org)**

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