

Leif Erikson Statue

by Solveig Lee

Leif Erikson! A tribute to Scandinavian immigration! On October 6, 2007, hundreds of immigrants and the descendants of immigrants gathered at the Shilshole Marina in Seattle. The bronze statue of Leif Erikson, creation sculpted for the Port of Seattle by August Werner at the time of Century 21 Seattle's World Fair in 1962, has been reinstated on the Shilshole Bay waterfront. Leif Erikson faces west, looking toward waters of bay with the plaza at his feet, designed with thirteen rune stones so placed to remind one of a Viking ship. On the stones are found plaques with names of Scandinavians who made America their new home. The plaza is the creation of Seattle artist, Jay Haavik.

As the 3 o'clock hour for the dedication neared, the Hugo Helmer Band of Mount Vernon directed by Leif Holmes, played favorite Nordic tunes, such as "La oss leve". Master of ceremonies was Terje Leiren, Chair of the Scandinavian Studies Department, University of Washington. Mastering all of the details for the move of the Leif Erikson statue and dedication of the Leif Erikson Plaza was Kristine Leander. The Dedication Program was as follows: Welcome by Kristine Leander; Artist: Jay Haavik, Designer of the Runic Stones and Plaza; Address: Port of Seattle Commissioner Alec Fisker; Music: Norwegian Ladies Chorus of Seattle performing the song they sang in 2000 at Brattahlid, Erik the Red's Farm in Greenland, on the 1000th anniversary of Leif's voyage to America; Comments: Icelandic Consul Jon Marvin Jonsson: "Who Was Leifur Eiriksson?"; Proclamation by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels honoring Oct. 7, 2007, as Scandinavian Day; Introduction of the new Executive Director of Nordic Heritage Museum by Allan Osberg, President of the Museum's Board of Trustees; Donation by Leif Erikson International Foundation, presented by Treasurer Sharon Storbo to the Nordic Heritage Museum's Building Fund; Music by August Werner, recorded in 1918; followed by the dedication and ribbon cutting by Kristine Leander (LEIF) and Eric Nelson, Executive Director of Nordic Heritage Museum.

The Leif Erikson Plaza Champagne Reception followed at 4 pm. As a prelude, the Seattle's Folk Voice Band played. Master of Ceremonies Terje Leiren, presided. Seattle Icelander Karin Bardarson sang her composition, "Song of Leif"; Address: Mark Maleng spoke on the topic, "Proud To Be Norwegian"; Music sung by an All Scandinavian Chorus (Finnish Choral Society, Norwegian Ladies Chorus, Norwegian Male Chorus, Swedish Women's Chorus, and the Svea Male Chorus) was "Finlandia" by Jean Sibelius and "Let There Be Peace on Earth" by Jill Jackson and Sy Miller, arranged by William Stickles. Julie Svendsen and Robert Johnston directed the choral groups. Kristine Leander made closing remarks. Dale Cummings sang, "Nidelven, Stille og Vakker Du Er".

So, they came. Those early immigrants sailed the Atlantic waters. Names on the plaques on Sunday date back to 1844. "Their sails were filled with hope and courage."

The following names touch on only a few immigrants who were represented at the dedication on Sunday.

Joyce Botten Strand: family members, Twins, Iver and Peder Botten left Valsøybotn in 1892; they settled at Silvana in the Stillaguamish Valley. Judith Tjosevig emigrated from Haugesand in 1914, lived in Watertown, SD, in 1914, then moved to Seattle in the 1930s. Arlene Wangenstein Templin's father, Knute N. Wangenstein, emigrated from Valdres; her grandmother, Alida Sandvig, came from Tao (Stavanger). Per Sorum, Honorary Board Member of Leif Erikson International Foundation, emigrated from Trondheim in 1926; he traveled to Seattle. Claire Sagen and her daughter, Kellie Sagen, submitted the name of Henry Scott (Skottheimsvik) from Kristiansund on a plaque. He emigrated from Kristiansund in 1929 and settled in Aberdeen, Washington. Kellie's great-grandparents, Alfred and Margrete Sagen, emigrated from Trondelag in 1923. Magnhild and Karl Olsøy left Risse (Trondheim) and arrived in Seattle in 1952. Dorrine Strandrud Olsen submitted the name of her father, Christopher Guinerius Olsen; he left Kristiansund in 1903 and settled in the Florence-Norman area near Silvana. Robert McIntyre had the Strandrud Family listed; they emigrated to Minneapolis in 1882 or '83 and arrived in Ballard in 1903. Helen Anstey came from Selah, Washington; the names placed on the plaques were Judith from Rognaldsvåg in --- and settled in Ketchikan, Alaska; Hans emigrated from Stadlandet to Tacoma in 1927. Kari Fischer and her husband, Harry, and children, Thorvald and Anne, left Kristiansund in 1961. Chloe Foster beamed as one learned that her great-grandfather, Arthur Rorvik, left Alesund and arrived in Seattle in 1929.

What fun it was for subscribers to locate family names on the runestones! Louise Lunde searched until she found the names of her parents, Elizabeth Kaldestad Egaas who came from Husnes, Sunda, 1922, and Kristian Egaas from Karmøy in 1906.

Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Icelanders, and Finns were all represented at the dedication. Dr. Bill Pihl and his wife, Louise, from Mount Vernon, placed the names of his parents, Hildur and Hilding Pihl from Luleo, Sweden, in 1924; Louise's parents, S. Helena Edholm Erickson, from Åland on plaques.

Jay Haavik's aunt, Volly Norby Grande, smiled as she related her family names: father, Johan Norby who left Trysil in 1886; Julia Jacobsen who came from Ovre Vats in 1887. Her husband's parents, Odin Peralius Grande emigrated from Mosvik in 1898; Oline Olausdatter Grande in 1890. Jensine Korsand Grande left Smøla in 1894.

These names only represent a small fraction of the 840 names now inscribed on the plaques. More will be forthcoming.