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2018 Event Schedule

Date and Time	Event	Location
June 16, 2018	Midsummer	Home of Anne Keating
October TBA	Fall Harvest Dinner	Spindletop Hall
Luciafest	Gethsemane Lutheran Church	

SPRING AND SUMMER EVENTS

Midsummer is almost upon us! We will meet at the home of Anne Keating on Saturday, June 16, from 4 – 8. There will be dancing around the pole, weather permitting. If rain surprises us, we will meet indoors. Everyone is invited to bring a dish to share. Please let me know if you need directions to my address. Valkommen!

We had a great time on Saturday, May 12 celebrating Syttende mai, Norwegian Constitution Day (technically celebrated on the 17th!). This year, we visited Shillito Park which offers a beautiful setting. The weather was perfect and we had home-made ice cream and other special treats which Kristie prepared for all. A photo will follow by email.

There is a wonderful book called, The Viking, by several authors for Crescent Books which I recommend. I would like to share a bit of it with you. The people we think of as Vikings never referred to themselves that way. The French called them Normans which meant men from the north. (A little aside you might remember is that English law which pattern we follow used both Norman and Anglo-Saxon terms so that the user would understand. This is why you may find traditional legal documents repetitive, as in the case of "bequeath and devise" in wills for example.)

The nature of the landscape had a great influence on historical developments in Nordic countries. The forests, mountains and many inlets made communication by land difficult, so people relied on the sea to travel and communicate. There is a long string of islands along the coast of Norway called Leden which provides shelter from the Atlantic and made travel by ship much easier. I remember visiting the shore of southern Sweden where my relatives have a cottage; the sea was very tame compared to what I expected, and of course the land masses to the west, notably Denmark, tempered the waves.

The population settled mostly along the coasts. The authors point out that settlements ending in by, toft or torp indicate that the location was settled in Viking times. This made me think of Westby, Wisconsin and I wondered about the origin of the name. According to a Dictionary of American Family names, "Westby is an English habitational name from a number of places by that name in Lancashire, Lincolnshire, and West Yorkshire from Old Norse: *vestr*: west, and *byr*: settlement." A second definition states, "A Norwegian habitational name from any of 20 or more farmsteads, mainly in southeastern Norway, named in Old Norse as *Vestbyr*,"

The authors make a distinction between villages and towns. The population engaged mostly in agriculture and where farms clustered one might consider that a village existed. This pattern predominated all over northern Europe, they say, except where the Roman Empire established garrisons. There, people settled to provide goods and services, and to share particular expertise or skills. A town, they say, is characterized by people who are craftsmen and traders who sustain themselves by sales and for whom agriculture is not a way of life. The first towns in Scandinavia date to about 700 AD when trade was occurring with Europe and Frisia (Netherlands). The towns developed mostly along the coast where trading was easier. Many modern towns go back to Viking days, and there have been many excavations.

People were buried with goods to accompany them to the next life; a few very wealthy burials in ships may be found in all of the Scandinavian countries. Often the Rune stones were placed at burial sites, or to commemorate a major event. The runes have been deciphered. One stone called the Navelsjo Stone in Nöbbelholm says, "Gunnkel placed this stone in memory of Gunnar, his father, Rode's son. Helge laid him, his brother, in a stone coffin in Bath in England." This brings us to the travels which we will explore another time.

Come join us on Saturday, June 16!

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