

Chronicle from the Family Meeting of the The Östanby Family Society on the 20th-21st of September 2008

On a beautiful autumn day at the end of September, a brave crowd of Östanby relatives gathered for a 'last celebration' in historic surroundings in the area of Bergslagen. About 60 persons representing 3 generations, of which 6 were from the USA branch (III) and 2 from the Canada branch (XIV), gathered to socialize and to have a good time and to finally decide about the dissolution of the Society.

The theme for the weekend was 'iron and steel production' during the early 1900s. We therefore started at the town of Avesta and its old Ironworks where many expectant 'well known' and 'unknown' faces gathered at lunchtime. Questions and comments whirled around: *Hallo, who are you? How are you? Nice to see you... What branch? What a long time since we last saw each other! Where do you belong...Do you remember...As I recall it...So nice to meet your family! My, you have grown... Great! Don't really recognize you...*

Well, there was buzz in the air, hand shakes and plenty of hugs. That was the reason why some time elapsed before chairman Gunilla Eriksson had the opportunity to greet everybody welcome to the lunch that we actually had brought with us. Celebration general Lena Höög gave instructions about time and transportation with a clear message – keep the time schedule, otherwise we will jeopardize the programme!

Kristina Vallin arranged the usual meeting photography on the large stairs of the ironworks. When inside, we got to know and learn about the first ore ironworks production in Avesta, about the history of the iron from ore to steel via big blast-furnace ovens, and more. There was great interest in how to understand how people worked and lived in a world leading industrial place in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Via modern techniques, the old production methods of iron making was made vivid – out of the blast-furnace ovens came slag, we strode into enormous ovens and we could see how the ore came tumbling down. It rumbled, sparkled and smouldered. A very suggestive experience inside the darkness of beautiful ancient buildings. As a finish, we listened to a musical opera created among rusty tubes, ovens and drainage systems. For the inquisitive, there was even an exciting and mysterious mirror labyrinth, where even the most experienced navigator became dizzy.

The beautiful region of Västmanland was hereafter a nice setting to the car ride that took off to Sättra Brunn for further celebrations. Some took the opportunity to take a 'detour' to the Old Village of Avesta, where many small red houses showed how the town looked like in the beginning of the 17th century. A beautiful atmosphere including 4 centuries.

The common celebrations started at Sättra Brunn, the health bringing resort that was established in the 18th century by Doctor S. Kragge. In the area, spa, bathing cottage, church, hospital and lodgings were built to enable rich patients to become healthy by daily drinking of several gallons of natural mineral water.

After check-in at the hotel reception, we gathered for the last family meeting in the old Society House on the premises. Important decisions of the future of the Society were to be discussed. After registration of the participants and voting lists had been established, all were greeted welcome by the chairman. Orations of the memory of newly deceased members followed and after that, the proposed meeting chairman Torsten Egerö took the chair.

The meeting decided to dissolve the Society and at the same time, gave the so called dissolution board an assignment to go through with the process. That means deciding on the preservation of the Society archives, how to dispose of the remaining capital of the Society and arranging a home page and finishing as well as distributing the memory DvD that Göran Sjöström so creditably has arranged. A more detailed description of the dissolution procedure is available on our homepage www.ostanby.se.

In the Brunnshuset, the music was loud when we gathered for a drink at 7 o'clock. It was a bit chilly, almost frost in the air! The stories of the Sättra Brunn history became a nice break from all talk among relatives.

What we learned was: Already at 4 o'clock in the morning, the day started by the poor people starting to drink their prescribed rations of the mineral water. One hour later, the farmers would come and at 6 o'clock, it was time for the higher society. The later in the day, the more prestigious groups. The guests were often prescribed to drink several gallons of water every morning and between drinking sessions they should walk around in the park during light conversation. Conversations of religion and politics were forbidden. Persons annoying other guests could be fined! There was a belief that anger could destroy the positive effects of water drinking. During the rest of the day, there was plenty of time for socializing, excursions and pleasures. Invitations to dinners and gatherings were numerous during the summer season at the premises. Maybe it was the social life and the many walks, rather than the water drinking that was salutary for the guests. Because they felt much better after their stay! In the health resort, there hanged crutches and canes, which had been left there as proof of successful cures.

Back to our party! In the dining room, we were met by beautifully laid tables with grill buffet. Cheers and singing were constant – and to be interrupted by spontaneous speeches. A special mention should be made concerning Amanda Key from Canada (branch XIV) who told us of her joy to belong to Swedish relations and also how much she appreciated to meet us relatives. All in an impressive 'own' Swedish!

We were many to applaud our chairman Gunilla Eriksson and celebration general Lena Höög for all their work. Gifts and hugs were distributed - **a thousand thanks!** Torsten Egerö finished the dinner with organising the famous "Bergslag play" – a tradition that is not to be missed. We were divided into different teams and Torsten himself acted as "blast furnace bailiff" and with a genuine accent along with gestures started all the small and big hammers in the iron works. There were thunderous hammerings and stampings that made glasses and china clink. A Bergslag tradition from many generations ago, from which many of us have dear childhood memories about feasts, where our meals would end in this way. As Toastmaster Susanne Ronge acted in a nice national costume.

Coffee was served at the Society house, where we spent the rest of the evening with entertainment and dancing. Apart from old photographs with many good and happy memories, we practised ball-room dancing. Susanne Ronge led us through elegant walking polonaise accompanied by Lena Höög and Hasse Gille on key harp. We were many who did not understand fully – but it was fun! At midnight to a bright and clear full moon, we wished each other good night and we all disappeared quietly for a good night's sleep.

After an intensive and tasty breakfast, we were off to Sala Silver Mine. For the adults, an exciting walk round in the silver mine awaited, while for the children a mining adventure with

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treasure hunting. Helmets, boots and rain coats had to be put on and group members counted – all who went into the mine had to come out! Via a big elevator in the Knight's Pit, we were being led down to the Ulrika Mine at 155 meter's depth. Well-informed guides told us of gruesome stories about life in the mines in these times, while we scrolled through dark winding mine paths, grand mountain rooms and magical lakes. It was a bit cold and moisty but at the same time very beautiful. At the end, we gathered in the big warm Victoria Hall, where we were served lunch all together.

Finally, we experienced an exciting fire show, down in one of the narrow paths. After that, we sang and shouted with elegance and dignity for our dear Östanby Family and now dissolved Society!

It is hard to imagine a more splendid and successful ending than this one. A special Thanks to Allan and Evelyn Johnson donation fund, which subsidized this nice feast.

Finally – a Big Thanks to all involved for a successful, nice and memorable 'last celebration'!

It is sad that our Society no longer exists, I say and many with me! concludes this chronicler Marina Backer Skaar Branch XIII Mathilda – grandchild of oldest daughter Ingrid, and daughter of Birgitta.