

# NORDIC-AMERICAN PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET

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### NOTES FROM MUSIC-ON-A STRING By Beatrice Hole

*As I write this Newsletter, the Psalmodikon and I are preparing for our participation at the Nordic Fest in Decorah, IA. I am hoping to see many of you Psalmodikon enthusiasts there!*

*We have had a great Summer, a bit too warm, but fun never-the-less.*

*I am looking forward to our annual gathering on September 15-16, when we can all play our Psalmodikons together again. We will have a lot of practicing to do on Saturday because the Psalmodikons have been invited to participate in the Sunday morning worship service!*

*We are so grateful to Koreen & Don Gerdin-Paulson who have invited us to hold our meeting at their church, Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in East Bethel, MN. Also for Larry & Deann Gjen-vick who will once again be preparing and serving us a delicious lunch Saturday noon. Saturday evening we will plan to "eat out" - "Dutch Treat" at a restaurant in the area—we are working on arrangements for that. See inside for more information about the annual meeting)*

*I always appreciate the many folks that come and "re-introduce" themselves to me. Often times I am so occupied to recognize someone in the crowds.*

*This being a perfect example: Several weeks ago*

*the Psalmodikon and I had been invited to participate at the 150th Anniversary Celebration at the Washington Prairie Church south of Decorah, IA. After one of the services, I talked with Ruth Benson, who is a granddaughter of Elsie Thompson. Elsie was a member of the Wisconsin Ladies Quartet.*

*The article reprinted on Page #2 is from the 1938 issue of the Capitol Times of Madison, WI. These ladies have all passed away now, but Ruth has all of their Psalmodikons in storage. Hopefully, we will have a chance to see these sometime!*

*Meanwhile, enjoy the rest of the summer and we look forward to seeing many of you in September at the Annual Meeting!*

*Keep practicing your Psalmodikons - look for the hymn "Breathe on Me, Breath of God" further on in the Newsletter. By September may we be all ready to play this together.*



### A Note about Memberships

We have kept the annual dues for membership in the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet at a modest \$5.00 per year. This covers the cost of preparing and mailing the newsletter approximately 3 or 4 times a year to our members and also includes complimentary issues to a number of cultural organizations, museums and individuals. Please take a moment to note address label and if the date is not 2001 or beyond, your dues remittance will show your continued interest in our group. Thanks!



## On National Program For Third Time



Members of the McFarland Salmodikon quartet, who will appear in Washington, D. C., May 1-3, on the National Folk Festival program are shown above. They are from left to right, Bertha Larson, Mrs. Nora Brickson, Mrs. John Sullivan, and Mrs. Elsie Thompson.

## McFarland Salmodikon Players to Washington

Appear on National Folk Festival Program Again May 1-3

By IVER M. KALNES  
(Of The Capital Times Staff)

McFARLAND, Wis.—For the third time the McFarland Salmodikon quartet, playing the oldest string instrument of Norway, has accepted an invitation to appear on the National Folk Festival program, which will be held in Washington, D. C., May 1-3. The McFarland women, who have sponsored the revival of the ancient one-string instrument, appeared on the Folk Festival program in Chicago in 1937 and in Washington in 1938.

This summer's program will be the eighth annual National Folk festival. It is sponsored by the Washington Post Folk Festival association.

Sarah Gertrude Knott is the founder and director of the festival and M. J. Pickering, business manager. Both are from St. Louis, Mo., but early each year they set up offices in Washington, D. C., which since 1936 has been the permanent seat of the national festival.

Two Wisconsin members of the national committee of the festival association are Ethel Rockwell, Madison, former chief of the bureau of dramatic activities at the University of Wisconsin, and the Rev. Robert S. Johnston, S. J., Milwaukee, professor of philosophy at Marquette university.

Other Committee Members

On the roster of the national committee are found such names as Edwin N. C. Barnes, head of the department of music in the public schools

son, director of school of art in University of Oklahoma; E. C. Mable, head of department of speech and dramatic art, University of Iowa; W. Roy MacKenzie, head of department of English, Washington university, St. Louis, Mo.; Arnauld C. Matis, president of Bucknell university, Lewisburg, Pa.; Gith Thompson, head of English department, Indiana university; and Frank C. Brown, head of English department, Duke university, Durham, N. C.

"I heard the McFarland Salmodikon players at the National Folk festival in Chicago in 1937 and they did a very nice job," Miss Rockwell commented when interviewed by The Capital Times Wednesday.

Mrs. Elsie Thompson, leader of the McFarland quartet, will be 78 years old on her next birthday, June 25. Her father was a school teacher and cantor in Norway, where he used the one-string instrument in teaching school children the melodies of church hymns. That was the original use of the salmodikon which continued through generations. Before the advent of the organ, the salmodikon was also used to lead the singing in churches.

Improve Playing System

The McFarland women, in reviving the use of the salmodikon, have improved the system by playing four salmodikons in ensemble, something that was never done in Norway. Those who have heard the quartet at the National Folk festival, where an amplifying system is used, say that the music sounds like that from a pipe organ. Without amplifiers, the salmodikon volume is limited and mellow.

a daughter of Mrs. Thompson, is the group's announcer. She tells the history of the salmodikon as well as the history of the Norwegian hymns played. Mrs. Nora Brickson, McFarland, is also a daughter of Mrs. Thompson. The fourth member of the quartet, Miss Larson, is Mrs. Thompson's niece. The success of the quartet rests largely on keeping it a family affair, which makes it easier for the members to get together for rehearsals.

The McFarland women have played at the Century of Progress in Chicago, at the state fair in West Allis, and at numerous concerts in churches in Rockford, Ill., Chicago, Madison, and many other places.

Leave McFarland Apr. 25

The quartet will drive to Washington in Mrs. Brickson's automobile. They plan to leave McFarland on Friday, Apr. 25, spend four days on the road, and have a day or two for rehearsals before the festival opens.

Idun lodge, Sons of Norway, Madison, has voted \$10 toward travel expense for the group. Other Scandinavian societies in Madison, Slough-ton and Edgerton will be asked to contribute. The cost of the trip was kept down to about \$80 last time and the women hope to be able to keep within that budget again.

"The girls suggested that we go to hotels this time, on account of my age," said Mrs. Thompson, "but I told them that I can take it as well as anyone in the group and we will buy groceries, do our own cooking and sleep in tourist cabins."

Festival Aides in Statement

In a letter to this writer, Pickering, business manager of the festival, said:

"The Salmodikon quartet has appeared on our program twice, in 1937

in Chicago and in 1938 in Washington. Due to the unusual type of presentation, it is always particularly well received by our audiences and also it is the subject of much advance publicity, as well as following the appearance, many of these stories carrying pictures. This is not only true of Washington, but papers throughout the country, and magazines, which carry reviews of the festival.

"Last year we had 888 participants from 27 states and Hawaii, all of them coming to us at their own expense. As is usual, sponsored by civic and educational organizations in their communities who recognize the value of what the groups are doing in preserving their folk heritage."

"The National Folk Festival association is a non-profit, educational organization and a co-operative one, and only in this way can the annual event be held with the various organizations throughout the country paying the expenses of the groups coming in."

"We like very much to have the fine women of the Salmodikon quartet with us again and suggest that the Sons of Norway and the Scandinavian-American Fraternity and others interested at Madison sponsor them."

*From Cap Times  
Madison, WI  
-1938-*





following—Thanks for sharing, and we hope to see the Psalmodikons at the Annual Meeting)

Letters from our members.....

Beatrice,  
I appreciate your dedication toward the Presentation of the Psalmodikon.  
Today my wife and I helped entertain 300 Jr. High Pupils at what is called "Buckshot Junction" on the east outskirts of Bismarck, ND.  
Nineteen old buildings have been moved to this place and have been restored. There were demonstrations and narration at most of the buildings. The students came in groups of 20 to 30.  
I demonstrated the Psalmodikon and Hardanger Fele with our other Norsk artifacts.  
At ninety-one years, I feel fortunate to still be able to take part. Keep up the good work.  
Hilsen, Sig Peterson of Almont, ND.



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Beatrice,  
In "Notes from the Editors" in the April issue (Psalmodikon News) I see the editor and staff are inviting members to submit photos. Enclosed are 3 photos of items I have built—including psalmodikons, horse hair bows (full size and miniatures), carrying cases, and KD music stands.



If you remember at the September 2000 workshop meeting, I'm the new member who came with a psalmodikon that had a very irregularly spaced fret board. I showed you how I arrived at the fret positions by using the piano. In retrospect I guess either my piano was out of tune, or my hearing was bad, or—a combination of both.

Many thanks to Floyd Foslien for providing me with a printed sheet on how to space the frets mathematically. This so enthused me that I couldn't stop with building just one psalmodikon. In asking family and friends for horse hair, I wound up with a more than ample supply—so I couldn't stop with building just one bow. With some shorter hair left, I made several 12-inch miniature bows.



I remember the article in the August 2000 issue of the Psalmodikon Newsletter about the horse hair should be in alternating directions—so yes, every hair (one at a time) is placed that way. The bows sound pretty good.

Thanks again for your and Rodger's kind hospitality to my wife, Ardy, and me at the September 2000 workshop meeting.

Bud Albrecht, Montevideo, MN.

(Note Bud's fine accomplishments in the 3 pictures