



## Navigating the Nordic Way



***"Magnetism has  
shaped my life."***

Björn Kjellström

Björn Kjellström's motto, printed onto his business card, was: "Magnetism has shaped my life." While not the inventor of orienteering itself, Björn was the co-inventor of the modern compass and likely the person most responsible for the sport's global spread. We might even say that Björn Kjellström has shaped our appreciation for magnetism as much as it shaped him.

Orienteering had developed from Swedish military exercises in the late 1800s. These practices taught soldiers to navigate terrain only with their map and compass, which at the time were mounted into wooden boxes. Among the first-known orienteering competitions were those held in May 1893 by the Stockholm city garrison. Norway

(at the time part of Sweden) held the first civilian competitions near Oslo in 1897. Its early spread to the broader public was enabled by Swedish and Norwegian industrialization, railroads, and land surveying. Such surveys, in conjunction with inexpensive printing technology such as lithography and subsequent tourist maps, encouraged the availability of maps for public use.

Today, orienteering is a sport requiring use of map and compass to navigate an outdoor course. While variations of orienteering might involve skis, bicycles, or wheelchairs, its typical competitions are on foot and scored so the orienteer with the fastest time wins. Despite the sport's early popularity

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## Note from the Director

I've been thinking a lot lately about exploration and all of the forms that it takes. The Vikings, famous as explorers, seem to have been motivated by a combination of thirst for adventure and hunger for conquest and resources. These have been traditional motivations for many explorers over the centuries who have left the familiar in search of new lands.

Today we might find that opportunities for exploring undiscovered places in the world are limited. Just recently I was with a friend and occasionally a topic of conversation initiated a deep dive of exploration for him, albeit on his phone and with the aid of a powerful search engine. His thirst for more and more information made me realize that he was a digital explorer. But exploring on a device is very two-dimensional and sometimes modern explorers need to be inspired to leave their comfort zone, as well.

For over a decade the museum has been introducing Philadelphia's children to the Swedish sport of orienteering through our school programs, and we are thrilled to be presenting it to a broader public through the exhibition *Outdoor Adventures: Navigating the Nordic Way*. For centuries, explorers and seafarers have used compasses to navigate in places where wayfinding is difficult, such as in the forest and on the ocean! In the early 1900s, Björn Kjellström made the process of finding true north much easier with his liquid-filled compass. This compass has become a staple for Boy Scouts and hikers as they explore the world around them. We hope that this exhibition and the brand new map of FDR Park will spark the desire in all of our visitors to get outside and explore new places, including the museum's beautiful surroundings.

*Tracey Beck*  
Tracey Beck

### *Navigating the Nordic Way continued from front cover*

in the Nordic region, its global spread was halted by the compass's limitations. While early orienteers used protractors with their compasses to navigate, the difficulty of using both tools alongside a map meant that precise navigation in the field was challenging. Additionally, the magnetic needles within these "dry" (not liquid-filled) compasses could take about 30 seconds to stabilize. In a timed sport where a few degrees might take one mile off-course, these issues frustrated attempts to popularize the sport amongst amateurs.



The solution came through collaboration between the three Kjellström brothers—Björn, Arvid and Alvar—and inventor Gunnar Tillander. Orienteering was hardly new to the Kjellströms—they had competed on skis as children and had recently started a business selling used compasses and ski equipment. But their breakthrough came in 1928 when Tillander approached the brothers with his prototype for a compass incorporating both protractor and compass into a single instrument. The design, familiar to us today, mounted a rotating compass onto a clear plastic baseplate that allowed for accurate navigation when placed over a map. Tillander's invention simplified the orienteer's toolkit while making navigation even more precise.

One Kjellström brother, Björn, supplemented Tillander's compass with his own invention: a liquid damping chamber for

the magnetic needle. By submerging the magnetic needle in a clear liquid (often a clear oil or ethyl alcohol), the time needed for it to stabilize was reduced from about thirty seconds to only four. The liquid also formed a buffer against exterior shocks and vibrations—necessary to orienteers in the field. Tillander and Kjellström's innovations were vital in improving the accuracy of field compasses, reducing orienteering's complexity, and increasing the sport's competitive viability.

With these innovations the Kjellström brothers and Gunnar Tillander formed their company, Silva, in 1932. Silva was instrumental in popularizing orienteering among amateurs, and by 1934, a quarter-million Swedes were active in the sport. Outside of civilian use, Silva's new field compasses were put to the test in Finland's Winter War and the Nazi occupation of Norway. Finnish officers credited orienteering with having strengthened Finnish defenses against the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1940. A few years later, Norwegian resistance fighters utilized orienteering and Silva's liquid-filled compass to combat Nazi soldiers and assist Norwegian civilians escaping to Sweden. Björn Kjellström himself fought for the Finns and, with his first wife, a Norwegian, provided a safe-house to refugees from Norway.

After the war, Björn immigrated to the United States to spread orienteering and Silva. While Björn sought to spread orienteering in America, his arrival did not mark the sport's first appearance in the United States. America's first orienteering competitions had already been organized by Finnish army officer, Lt. Piltti Heiskanen in 1941 at Dartmouth College (called Tiedust by students, an Anglicization of the Finnish name for orienteering, Tiedustelujuoksue). An accomplished skier and orienteer, Heiskanen took charge of Dartmouth's military skiing program (well-situated in the mountains of New Hampshire) in 1941 as the United States prepared for World War Two.

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# An Interview with Swedish Orienteering Champion, Emma Johansson

Recently, curator Trevor Brandt had the opportunity to speak with Swedish orienteering champion Emma Johansson, giving us a glimpse into the contemporary world of orienteering (text edited for clarity).

**TB:** Let's start by talking about some of your successes in orienteering. I know you've competed in recent championships.

**EJ:** Yes that's correct. I won the bronze medal in middle distance and bronze in relay [at the 2015 World Orienteering Championship in Scotland]. And then last year - or 2017 rather- I won the gold medal in relay.

**TB:** Are these competitions only in Sweden or are they around the world?

**EJ:** Well they are mostly in Europe, but there have also been world championships in the US and Australia. But, again, they're mostly in Europe. In 2015 they were in Scotland and in 2017 they were in Estonia.

**TB:** Wow. It does seem, though, that orienteering is really most popular in the Nordic region.

**EJ:** Yes, that is where the origin of the sport is. It's where it started and it's where the biggest amount of orienteers are today. I also think it is also a matter of access to the terrain and the forests and this works pretty well in Scandinavia as you can use all of the areas- there's not that much private land.

**TB:** That's called the *allmansrätt* – the freedom to roam?

**EJ:** Yes, *allmansrätten*.

**TB:** Right. When thinking about orienteering in America, you really need a big park or public space. But in Sweden you can use these laws to make the courses more adventurous or at least able to go more places.

**EJ:** Yes but of course you must always speak to hunting groups. And if you're planning build an arena then of course you must always speak to landowners. But it is free for anyone to go out in the forest with a map anywhere and that is the *allmansrätt*.



Emma Johansson

**TB:** Great. And I know that orienteering is taught to Swedish schoolchildren. Is that how you started?

**EJ:** Yes – it is, how do you say? – on the schedule for school sports. All children learn it a little bit in school. But if you start to compete, then it is mostly because your family was already in the sport or you go to the local club.

**TB:** So that's how you started—through your family or through a club?

**EJ:** Yes, my parents were doing this when we were young and that's how we started. It's quite common that you start as a young kid. The youngest ones competing are like 6 or 7 years old.

**TB:** Orienteering seems like a skill that you can carry with you throughout life. Being able to look at a map and realizing where there's a hill or a river rather than just having to look at your GPS.

**EJ:** Yeah I think it's a good skill to have whether you're competing or not. Because either you're driving your car or you are walking in the mountains and need to navigate. I don't always trust the GPS.

**TB:** I'm curious about how you train for your events. Do you train in one particular country or do you travel a lot to train for different competitions?

**EJ:** Yes so now I've retired from the highest levels of competitions. But when you are at the top levels you do the basic training at home – the physical and technical training. But when you're preparing for a special championship or specific competition then you would want to go there more than once because all terrains look a little bit different so it is not the same. Even in Sweden there is a huge difference. If you are in the south in Skåne, they have birch trees so it is very open. If you're on the coast it is hilly and there are many details. So, of course, if you go to south Europe it is far different than if you go to the east. So you have to go there at least some weeks before to prepare for the specific terrain. But mostly, of course, most top-level athletes are working or studying on the side. There isn't really much money in the sport so of course you'll want to stay and train at home. So in Scandinavia there are really good training opportunities in local clubs.

**TB:** And it's great that Sweden is so varied so that there are many different types of courses. I'm curious about what it's like to run through them. Do you have a particular memory of your favorite course?

**EJ:** If I would pick my favorite—I would say a course in Sweden called *Höga Kusten*. It is up north, on the east coast. It is really demanding physically and technically, and you really have to read the map carefully. It is also in the mountains, so there are a lot of features. The challenge is to be as strong as possible physically so that you have the capacity to read the map. If you get too tired, you will lose your focus.

**TB:** So it's physical and mental at the same time. Is orienteering a tight-knit community or is it competitive?

**EJ:** I would say that it's more of a family aspect or a familial atmosphere. The orienteering family is one thing that I like the most. If I go somewhere I can contact someone to do orienteering. It's a kind of a sport where it's a community all over the world. Even though you don't know everyone, through some people you know someone else and everyone is always really helpful.

# Spring 2018 Upcoming Events and Registration Info

There is always something going on at the American Swedish Historical Museum. See below for scheduled events. Please check with the Museum to confirm dates and other details. Refunds will not be granted for cancellations after the registration deadline. To register for events by phone call (215) 389-1776. Online registration is available through links in the museum's email announcements or on the Events Calendar page of our website, [americanswedish.org/events](http://americanswedish.org/events).



## MONTHLY PROGRAM:

### Toddler Time

10:30 am - 11:30 am

The third Tuesday of each month ASHM offers specially designed programs to

introduce Swedish culture through art, science, and literature in fun and creative ways to children ages 18 months to 4 years old. The cost is \$5 per child or free for museum Household Members. There is no charge for accompanying caregivers. Register by phone or online.

**Tuesday March 19, 2019**  
**Whatever the Weather**

**Tuesday May 21, 2019**  
**Turtletastic**

**Tuesday June 18, 2019**  
**Fem Små Grodor- Five Little Frogs**

## Swedish Cooking Workshop

**Saturday March 23**

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Join fellow culinary enthusiasts for a totally hands on cooking workshop at ASHM. Whether you are new to Swedish cuisine or would like to brush up on old skills with friends, this engaging workshop helps aspiring chefs work through the recipes step by step. Check the events page on the ASHM website for upcoming recipe information. Space is extremely limited; \$50 per person (includes all food and drinks). Reservations are required; sign up online or by phone by March 18th.



## extraABBAganza!

### ABBA Dance Party

**Saturday, March 9**

7:00 - 10:00 pm

Break out bell bottoms and platform shoes!

What better place to celebrate the iconic music of ABBA than the American Swedish Historical Museum. DJ Drake will spin the

throwbacks as everyone lets out their inner Dancing Queen. Highlights of the evening will include a dancing and costume contest along with a few surprises! Tickets include food, cash bar. Be sure to register early before tickets sell out! \$30 members, \$35 non-members. Costumes are welcome but not necessary.

## Polarn O. Pyret Warehouse and Sample Sale

**Thursday, March 28**

10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Scoop up some fantastic finds for spring, and every season, at the Polarn O. Pyret Warehouse and Sample Sale. Stop by the museum anytime between 10am and 5pm to shop for ages newborn to tween. For those who are not familiar: a popular brand in Sweden since 1976, Polarn O. Pyret makes some of the best children's clothes in the world. They believe in good looking clothes that let children be children. Clothes should withstand wear-and-tear and become part of your family; from brother to sister, cousin to cousin. A percentage of every purchase will be donated to the museum, free admission will be offered the entire day.

## Members' Only Preview

### Outdoor Adventures: Navigating the Nordic Way Exhibit

**Friday, April 5**

6:00 - 8:00 pm

ASHM members are invited to a special preview of the new exhibit *Outdoor Adventures: Navigating the Nordic Way*! Join us as we explore the history of Nordic navigation, compasses, and the modern-day sport of orienteering. Curator, Trevor Brandt, and collection lender, Chris Cassone, will be on hand to give unique glimpses into the special history behind the objects. The event includes light refreshments. Be sure to visit our online events page to register. If you want to attend, but aren't a member, there is still plenty of time to join!



## Easter Family Fun Day and Egg Hunt

**Sunday, April 14**

2:00 - 4:00 pm

Introduce your little ones to Swedish Easter traditions.

Children can make Swedish Easter crafts, dress up as Swedish Easter witches, enjoy face painting, and take part in an egg hunt. Free for members and children 2 years and under, \$10 for non-members. Pay at the door.

## To Register For Events

call 215-389-1776, or visit online at

[www.americanswedish.org/calendar.htm](http://www.americanswedish.org/calendar.htm)

## Spring Ting Fundraiser Dinner and Auction

**Saturday, May 4, 6:00 pm**  
Join us at our special fundraiser, featuring a silent auction, three course dinner and Outstanding Achievement Award recipient Helena Hernmarck. Tickets start at \$95, RSVP by April 22. Call or check our website for more information.

## World Orienteering Day

**Wednesday, May 15**

4:30 - 7:30 pm

Join the American Swedish Historical Museum and the Delaware Valley Orienteering Association to learn about the unique sport of Orienteering. Originating in Sweden, Orienteering utilizes navigation skills to race from point to point throughout a set course. Event attendees will learn about the history of Orienteering, view our exhibition on the modern compass, and learn basic map reading skills before setting off to complete a course through FDR Park. Pre-registration for the event is suggested and available on our website, \$10 per person.

## Norwegian Constitution Day

**Friday, May 17**

11:30 am - 1:30 pm

In honor of Norwegian Constitution Day, *syttende mai*, ASHM will host a talk by Jorgen Flood who will discuss his book *The Wars for Scandinavian Supremacy 1524-1815*. If you have always been confused about what territory belonged to which nation at different points in time, come and find out! Enjoy a delicious buffet luncheon by Jeffrey Miller Catering, \$25 per person



## Swedish National Day

**Thursday, June 6**

10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Celebrate Swedish National Day at the American Swedish Historical Museum! Enjoy free

admission including guided tours at 11am and 1pm highlighting the history of the museum, and a special Swedish summer dessert treat.



## Midsommarfest

**Saturday, June 23**

4:00 - 7:00 pm

Celebrate summer at our annual *Midsommarfest*, complete with food, drinks,

homemade Swedish pastries, music and maypole dancing, as well as crafts and games for the kids. New this year, the award-winning Swedish band JAERV will be giving a very special performance that you don't want to miss! Members \$8, Non-members \$12, Children 4-12 \$5. Pay at the door.



# Images from Recent Events

Photographs by ASHM Staff

► *The 2018 New Sweden History Conference "Sojourning Strangers: Swedes and Germans in the Middle-Atlantic Colonies" took place in the German Society's spectacular Barthelmes Auditorium.*



▲ *Throughout the fall Carina Ahren has been teaching Swedish at the museum on Monday nights.*



▲ *This year's Lucia performance involved over 50 children taking on the roles of tomtar, pepparkaksgubbar, folkdansare, stjärngossar, tärnor and of course Lucia herself.*



▲ *For the Textile Demonstration Day we had artisans demonstrate various textile techniques such as spinning, weaving and knitting at stations around the museum. We also got to hear two great lectures from Becky Ashenden (in the picture) and Pat Olski.*

► *On November 30th we enjoyed one of the museum's favorite traditions – the annual Julbord – featuring a wide range of Swedish Christmas delicacies.*



▲ *In a collaboration with WHYY and the Franklin Institute we hosted "Vikings: Beyond the Feast" on Jan 17th. Participants got to taste various Viking-inspired dishes and enjoy activities such as playing Hnefatafl, making rune stones and trying on Viking armor.*



▲ *At November's "Friendship Fabrics" Toddler Time kids got to explore how wool is spun and made into clothes.*

◀ *About once a quarter the Genealogy Club meets to explore the branches of their Swedish ancestry.*



▲ *On Dec 27th a new addition to the museum's Christmas programming was born – a combined guided tour and glögg (Swedish mulled wine) tasting event. It was very appreciated by everyone attending!*

► *The Pea Soup Committee pulled off another wonderful Pea Soup and Punch evening on January 26th, and this year's event even included a live nyckelharpa performance to go with the dinner.*



# Contributions

**Do you want to make a contribution?** There are several easy ways to support us. Visit our web page [americanswedish.org/support](http://americanswedish.org/support) or call **215-389-1776** for more information.

## Contributions to the Collection

As a nonprofit organization, the American Swedish Historical Museum relies on the generosity of its friends and supporters to meet the costs providing programs and services, year-round, to thousands of local, national, and international visitors. Thank you for your contributions!

## New Members

October 1, 2018-January 31, 2019

### Life

Britta A. Mattson

### Friend

Gregory Brown & Linton Stables

### Organizational

Lansdale Public Library  
North Wales Area Library

### Household

Jennifer Armstrong  
Becky Ashenden  
Joshua Britton  
Gregory Brown & Linton Stables  
Elise & Bradford Campbell-Bennett  
Francesca Carendi  
Ida Danielsson & Alejandro Polanco  
Colleen Durkin & David Wytovich  
Lilah & Christopher Evans-Baiocchi  
Amy Kate & Douglas Falling-Lobel  
Mattias Fogelberg & Lacey Owczarsak  
Anders Forsberg  
Jennifer & Brittany Gustafsson-Thiemke  
Susan & Zachary Holland-Poyatt  
Jane & Daniel Horstmann-Lawson  
Amy Levine  
Patricia Lewis  
Carly & Nicholas Libertatore-Amoroso  
Andrew & Lina Liemon-Kristina  
Beck & Dan Ly-Allis  
Bonnie MacAllister & Victor Thompson  
Teresa & Vincent McCullough-Calvarese  
Erin & Jason McKenna-Dilks  
Niklas Munck  
Elsa & Gaetano Oliva-Cambria  
Pat Olski  
Dr. Karen Prince & Family

Johanna Quist-Nelson & Family  
Michael Rubenstein & Richard Taylor  
Olivia & Patrick Rudi-McGuigan  
Gus Sandstrom  
Lynn Segerstrom Knotts  
Michael Thompson  
Natalie & Dave Vogel-Howard  
Melissa Weissman & Tom Hooper

### Individual

Teres Brennan  
Stephanie Connor  
Linsey Danielson  
Deb Schreffler

### Seniors/Students

Sara H Brower  
Rebecca Croog  
Jon Harpool  
Janet Harriger  
Sally Lane  
Deborah Lippincott  
Gun-Marie Nalsen  
Ingrid Rosenback  
Susan Ross  
Chris Summers  
Margaret Trussell  
Ellen Wurster

## In Memoriam

*The ASHM lost some very special members in the last few months. We send our deepest condolences to their friends and family.*

Irma Greenspan  
Lila McCleary

## Annual Giving and Contributions

October 1, 2018-January 31, 2019

### Vasa

Kristina and John Antoniades  
John & Carin Foster  
Kay Ford  
Anders Edmund Greenspan  
Britta A. Mattson  
Mrs. Mary McCoy  
Margot & James Patterson

### Gold

Ken & Kerstin Cook  
Margaret Copeland  
Gordon & Jane Downing  
Kristina and Charles Kalb  
Mrs. Sandra Pfaff  
Wade R. Sjögren  
Fanny Warren  
Mrs. Eunice Winters

### Silver

Clifford Anderson  
Cynthia & Bruce Brandt  
Elisabeth and Wayne Brown  
Gudmund Iversen  
Kirstin Mattson  
Ellen T. Rye  
Earl & Sylvia Seppala  
Rachel Smith  
Lorraine & Richard Waldron

### Bronze

Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Anderson  
Christer & Patricia Baeckstrom  
Marianne Baeckstrom  
Alison Bennett  
Per & Angela Blomquist  
Tom & Jeanne Brady  
Sandra E. Brown  
Lisa C. Caplan  
Vicki & Barbro Cassman  
Keith & Hilma Cooper  
Jan & Lillemor Essunger  
Lennart A. Hahr  
Thomas F. & Mary Ann Hudson  
Kathi Keefe  
Karin Kornaga  
Ruth Lindeberg & Leonard Busby  
John Lundin  
Mary Anne Carlson Morgan  
Timothy Nurvala & Al Wulff  
Inger & Andy Stone  
Sally & Ed VanderLoop  
Mrs. Anne Wattman  
Rev. Dr. Kim-Eric Williams &  
Ms. Ruth Nelson Rizzi

### Friends

Ms. Marna Feldt  
Ralph Holmberg  
Margaretha Joelsson  
C.R. Karlsson  
Mr. & Mrs. Roger S. McCrea  
Helga H Miller  
Karin and David Svahn  
John Tepe  
Selma Tepper



# Membership

Please print all information as you wish it to appear on the membership roster.

Return this form to:

American Swedish Historical Museum  
Attn: Membership  
1900 Pattison Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19145-5901

Among the benefits of membership are:

- free admission to the Museum and library
- use of the ASHM Swedish Film Library borrowing system
- guest passes
- subscription to the newsletter
- 10% discount in the Museum Store
- discounts on admission to most events, workshops and Swedish language classes

For more information, please call 215-389-1776.

## Application & Renewal Form

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ **\$35:** Senior/Student    ☐ **\$75:** Organizational (Non-profit only)    ☐ **\$500:** Patron  
☐ **\$50:** Individual    ☐ **\$125:** Friend    ☐ **\$1,000:** Key Contributor  
☐ **\$65:** Household    ☐ **\$250:** Sustaining    ☐ **\$2,500:** Life
- Make check payable to ASHM or ☐ Charge my: VISA | MasterCard | Discover

Account # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

*The official registration and financial information of ASHM may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

*Your membership contribution to the American Swedish Historical Museum is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

 Please detach here and return.

### Navigating the Nordic Way continued from page 2

Björn was orienteering's most prominent promoter in America. Björn's early efforts culminated in his 1955 book, *Be Expert with Map and Compass*, a guide to orienteering that has sold over 500,000 English copies. Björn's efforts finally began to succeed by the 1960s, a decade that saw the birth of the Delaware Valley Orienteering Foundation, today the largest orienteering club in America, and the popularization of orienteering among the Marine Corps and West Point Academy. In 1971, Kjellström co-founded the United States Orienteering Foundation (USOF). As the USOF's long-time co-president and president emeritus, he had become the figure most widely associated with orienteering throughout North America.

As stated on his business card, magnetism captivated Kjellström. At his home in Pound Ridge, New York, Kjellström developed this fascination through an enormous collection of historical texts on magnetism and antique compasses from around the world. His collection included 17th century



Jesuit texts on magnetism's applications in theology, ancient Chinese compasses, and dozens of 18th century pocket compasses from France, Austria, and Portugal. Later in his life, Kjellström even traveled to the magnetic North Pole. He delighted in the unlimited freedom enabled by mastering map and compass, often reminding his friends: "Magnetic waves run from pole to pole, coursing right through our bodies, 24 hours a day. And ... they are free!" Björn's friend and student Christopher Cassone remembers, "Magnetism was always on his lips."

Björn's love for orienteering went far beyond magnetism. His daughter Carina notes that Björn loved the slower aspects of orienteering as much as its fast-paced competitions. Even as he became slowed by age and Parkinson's, Björn's six-foot-three frame was a daily sight on the trails he developed in the 4,700-acre Ward Pound Ridge Reservation around his home. And today, though Björn Kjellström is no longer with us, his legacy endures in the empowerment and freedom learned when harnessing magnetism with map and compass. To learn more about Björn Kjellström's life and his extensive collection of compasses, visit the American Swedish Historical Museum's special exhibit: *Outdoor Adventures: Navigating the Nordic Way*, on view April 6 to September 22, 2019.

*This exhibition is supported by grants from the ASHM Auxiliary, Midsommarklubben, SWEA New Jersey, SWEA Philadelphia, and an anonymous foundation. Support provided by the Philadelphia Cultural Fund. Funding for the American Swedish Historical Museum is supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.*

## Swedish Taste on the High Seas

by Christian Roden

The new installation, *Swedish Taste on the High Seas*, illuminates long-forgotten ties between the American Swedish Historical Museum and the Swedish American Line ship, the Kungsholm. Construction of both the museum and the ocean liner were completed in 1928, the heyday of Art Deco design. The museum, built on the site of the 1926 American Sesquicentennial Exposition, celebrated 300 years of Swedish-American heritage in its architecture, combining details from Eriksberg Castle and George Washington's Mount Vernon. The Kungsholm's Art Deco interiors were designed by Swedish architect Carl Bergsten. As the designer for the Swedish Pavilion at the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts in Paris, Bergsten received international critical acclaim and became one of the major voices in Scandinavian modernism. Unlike many of his international colleagues, Bergsten infused his work with the historic influence of Swedish handicraft and folk art. This take on Art Deco proved immensely popular in North America, and was encouraged by a major exhibition

of Swedish decorative arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in 1927.

For passenger spaces on the liner, Bergsten hired some of the leading artists of the day, including major figures in the country's burgeoning hemslöjd movement, to produce furniture, carpets, tapestries, paintings, and murals. From the ship's maiden voyage in December 1928, the Swedish American Line described her as "a floating museum of Swedish arts and crafts." From 1928 until the Second World War, the Kungsholm was a floating icon of Swedish modernism, and well known to the American public thanks to her many voyages to New York City and winter cruises between the United States and the Caribbean. She was one of the first vessels where architects, designers, and artists began to experiment with new ideas and push the

stylistic boundaries of their work, rather than copy historical styles of the past.

Between 1928 and 1938, the galleries of the American Swedish Historical Museum were designed and installed one by one, in preparation for the museum's dedication. In addition to commemorating the past, the museum became a showcase for contemporary Swedish culture and craft as well. Many of the galleries designers looked to Bergsten's work on the Kungsholm for examples of recognizably Swedish modern design. For example, the John Ericsson Room, designed and installed in 1931, directly references the liner's first-class foyer in the choice and treatment of the materials, including the Macassar ebony veneer and pewter inlay. Other Museum spaces, such as the Golden Map Room, used the artistic choices employed on the ship to interpret similar themes to museum patrons. The Kungsholm's interiors became a sourcebook for people desiring to emulate Swedish modern design. Today, with the liner long gone, the museum galleries remain as an important record of this seminal decade of Swedish design history. *Swedish Taste on the High Seas*, centered on the museum's model of the Kungsholm that has been on display since the early 1950s, celebrates anew the precedent set by the vessel and its lasting impact on ASHM.

