



Director Ingmar Bergman and actor Victor Sjöström on the set of *Wild Strawberries*.

From Taste to Technology, Part 2:

Exploring Postwar Optimism and Disillusionment

In the last newsletter, we offered a look at the first section of *From Taste to Technology: 100 Years of Nordic Innovation & Impact*. This landmark exhibition invites visitors on a journey through a century of influence, thoughtfully divided into four thematic quarter centuries that illuminate a distinct era of Nordic impact in the United States.

The United States underwent incredible change between 1950 and 1974, as it moved from a postwar vision of hopeful progress to a culture wrestling with disillusionment, moral ambiguity, and the search for authentic identity in a fractured world.

After the horrors of World War II, Americans longed for comfort, beauty, and simplicity. Driven by a booming postwar economy, optimistic families began to flock to the suburbs in search of the “American Dream.” At the same time, the traveling exhibition *Design in Scandinavia* (1954-1957) introduced middle-class Americans to over 700 examples of contemporary home furniture from Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway. From designers like Arne Jacobsen and Hans Wegner, Nordic furniture offered comfort, beautiful natural wood accents, and an emphasis on functionality and minimalism that fit perfectly into carefully curated postwar homes.

Beyond furniture, the desire for beauty, minimalism, and functionality extended into decorative items as well. In the 1950s and 60s, Swedish glassmakers like Orrefors and Kosta Boda became staples in American department stores and high-end shops. Their products were beautiful: featuring organic shapes, muted colors, and intricate etchings. Symbolizing a need for clarity and

beauty in a changing world, owning a piece of Orrefors or Kosta Boda glass was a sign of status and elevated taste.

Nordic cuisine and kitchenware also gained popularity in the postwar era. Originating in Sweden in the 1920s, cinnamon rolls, or *kanelbullar*, became popular in the suburban United States in the 1950s thanks to Pillsbury’s development of refrigerated dough and the availability of the household refrigerator. Pre-cut and packaged in cardboard tubes, Pillsbury’s ready-to-bake cinnamon rolls with buttercream icing were a sweet addition to an emerging American coffee culture.



Pillsbury cinnamon roll advertisement, 1960.

Capitalizing on the popularity of Nordic Functionalism, kitchenware brands like Husqvarna and Klafrestrom offered minimalist lines of cast-iron cookware that made everyday food prep easy. In 1966, Minnesota-based bakeware company Nordic Ware rose to fame when a bundt cake baked in one of its pans came in second place at the Pillsbury Bake-Off. The recipe for the winning “Tunnel of Fudge” cake became a nationwide sensation, creating an insatiable demand for the bundt pan in American homes.

Note from the Director

This newsletter arrives at the start of the much-anticipated summer of 2026 celebrations. If you're anything like me, you may approach highly anticipated—perhaps even overhyped—milestones with a mix of excitement and skepticism. Moments like the turn of the millennium in 2000 carried enormous expectations: hopes, anxieties, reflection, and a collective gaze toward the future. When January 1st came, technology hadn't come to a halt, and life quickly returned to normal—even as we adjusted to calling this the 21st century.

At ASHM, our commemoration of America's 250th anniversary coincides with another meaningful milestone—100 years since the Museum's founding. We began marking this occasion in January, and as you'll see in this newsletter, much more lies ahead. Midway through the celebration, it's worth pausing to reflect on why we mark such moments at all. Celebration matters. Taking time to acknowledge how far we've come offers real psychological benefits, grounding us in a sense of progress and possibility. When we celebrate together, those benefits extend outward, strengthening our shared sense of community and reminding us that even personal milestones are rarely achieved alone. These moments of recognition can also provide a welcome pause from the pace and pressures of daily life.

At the same time, celebration does not require us to see the past as perfect. Milestones invite honest reflection: what we've achieved, what we've learned, and what we might do differently. They help us consider what is worth preserving and what should change as we move forward. As this year of commemoration continues, I invite you to see it not simply as a series of events, but as an opportunity to connect past, present, and future with clarity and shared purpose.

Tracey Beck

Tracey Beck

From Taste to Tech continued from front cover

However, the optimism that characterized this period only masked the era's problems. Beneath the surface, endemic racial tensions and the ever-present prospect of nuclear annihilation threatened to burst the illusion of stability. By the late 1950s, this unease gave rise to the countercultural movement, which rejected materialism and conformity to embrace freedom and questions of morality and purpose.

It was during this time that Nordic cinema—especially the work of Swedish director Ingmar Bergman—became popular in the U.S. Bergman's films centered on deeply conflicted characters, the absurdity of life, the certainty of death, and the absence of God. His focus on existentialism resonated deeply with an American audience grappling with morality, searching for identity, and questioning their nation's values throughout the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War. His films encouraged Americans to search for meaning, and see cinema not only as entertainment, but as a vehicle for deep reflection.



Max von Sydow as Antonius Block and Bengt Ekerot as Death in Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*.

As the counterculture movement began to reshape American society, Tove Jansson's Moomins, Charles Schulz's Peanuts, and Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking also offered unexpected reflections of the times. Tove Jansson's first book, *The Moomins and the Great Flood* (1945), centered on trauma, separation, and displacement - a direct response to the devastation of World War II. Likewise, following the adventures of Charlie Brown and his friends, the Peanuts themes of existential dread and insecurity—shown through the title character's feelings of depression and anxiety—echoed the threat of nuclear annihilation and the pressure many young Americans felt to conform. Meanwhile, Pippi Longstocking's rejection of authority and refusal to conform to rules she saw as silly resonated with activists committed to social change.

During this time of social upheaval, views on parenting also shifted. Whereas parents in the 1950s were generally stricter and more distant, parents in the '60s and '70s became inspired by countercultural ideas of individual expression and favored a more lenient, experimental approach to child-rearing. This shift in style coincided with the arrival of LEGO in the United States. Invented in 1932 by Danish furniture maker Ole Kirk Christiansen, the colorful plastic bricks highlighted the counterculture's emphasis on creativity and open-ended play and became wildly popular with the Baby Boomer generation.

During this period of socio-political upheaval, the 1969 Apollo 11 Moon landing provided a rare, unifying experience for Americans, momentarily capturing the attention and pride of the nation and bringing a fragmented country together around a shared moment of national achievement. On July 20, 1969, 150 million Americans watched in shared awe as Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin - a Swedish American - set foot on the lunar surface. The event united the country, steered the conversation away from conflict and division to wonder and possibility and gave Americans a renewed sense of collective achievement. For many, it was proof that the United States remained capable of extraordinary accomplishments even amid internal discord.

Stay tuned as we continue to explore the stories, objects, and ideas that shape *From Taste to Technology* in future newsletters and be sure to visit the Museum to experience a century of Nordic innovation in person.



Ant Chair by Arne Jacobsen.

A Century Worth Celebrating: The American Swedish Historical Museum Prepares for a Landmark Gala

2026 marks a remarkable milestone for the American Swedish Historical Museum as it celebrates 100 years of preserving and sharing cultural heritage. To commemorate this moment, the Museum is hosting a spectacular Gala—an evening designed not only to honor the past, but to celebrate the future in style.

Set within the Museum's historic and elegant surroundings, the Centennial Gala promises an immersive experience for guests. Attendees can look forward to an evening of sophisticated dining, with a menu featuring delicious dishes inspired by the cuisine of the past 100 years—an homage to the rich cultural traditions that have shaped the museum's legacy.

The gala serves as an important opportunity to support the museum's ongoing mission; sponsorships are available for both individuals and corporations interested in playing a meaningful role in this historic occasion. Sponsors will not only contribute

to the preservation of cultural heritage, but will also be recognized as key supporters during this once-in-a-century event.

Anticipation for the event is already building, with additional details to be announced in the coming months. Expect updates throughout the summer, including news of special guests and exclusive experiences that will make the evening memorable.

With limited tickets available, early reservations are strongly encouraged. For those who value history, culture, and community, the American Swedish Historical Museum's Centennial Gala is shaping up to be one of the year's most anticipated events—a fitting tribute to a century of connection and a promising look ahead to the next.

Tickets are available now. Be part of history and join the celebration!



New Nordic Dinner Featuring Chef Ulrika Bengtsson



Pull up a chair and join us for an evening of New Nordic cuisine at the American Swedish Historical Museum. This special outdoor dinner is all about slowing down, sharing great food, and enjoying the simple beauty of a meal together.

Led by award-winning Swedish chef Ulrika Bengtsson, and in collaboration with the Jeffrey A. Miller Hospitality Group, the menu is inspired by the heart of Scandinavian cooking. Imagine fresh herbs, foraged flavors, and locally sourced ingredients, all coming together in dishes designed to be

passed, shared, and enjoyed together. It's a celebration of simplicity, seasonality, and the joy of gathering around a community table.

Set outdoors in a beautiful, relaxed setting, this one-night-only event captures the spirit of Scandinavian hospitality: thoughtful, inviting, and centered on connection.

Bring your friends and get ready to share an evening of delicious food and good company!

About the Chef

Ulrika Bengtsson began her career at New York City's celebrated Aquavit before serving as chef for the Swedish Consulate General, where she introduced audiences around the world to Swedish cuisine through events and demonstrations. She later became a key figure in New York's Scandinavian food scene, opening her own restaurant in 1999 and, most recently, leading the Björk Café & Bistro at Scandinavia House.

Adding to the evening's story is a strong commitment to sustainability. The Jeffrey A. Miller Hospitality Group has recently been recognized by the Green Restaurant Association as a "3 Star" Certified Green Caterer—the first in the greater Philadelphia region to receive this honor. This certification reflects meaningful efforts in waste reduction, energy efficiency, water conservation, sustainable sourcing, and pollution reduction—all shared Scandinavian values! At its core, the designation represents a shared belief that great food and care for the environment belong at the same table.

Summer 2026 Upcoming Events and Registration Info

There is always something happening 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, visit www.americanswedish.org or call 215.389.1776.

Monthly Programs:

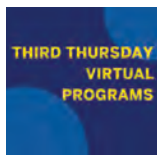


Toddler Time 10:30-11:30 am

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

Swedish culture through art, science, and literature in uniquely fun and creative ways to children ages 2 to 5 years old.

Tuesday, June 16 – Celebrate Sweden
Tuesday, July 21 – The Ways We Go
Tuesday, August 18 – The Dala Horse
Tuesday, September 15 – ABCs & 123s Svenska Style



Centennial Third Thursday Virtual Program Series 12:00–1:00 pm

Don't miss our free Third Thursday Program Series every month of 2026! This

series will feature lectures, virtual field trips, and behind-the-scenes looks at our Centennial exhibitions and rarely seen collections items. Check the online events page for each month's topic.

Thursday, June 18th
Thursday, July 16th
Thursday, August 20th
Thursday, September 17th



Swedish National Day Friday, June 6th 10:00 am-4:00 pm

What better place to celebrate Swedish National Day than the American

Swedish Historical Museum? Learn about the Museum's history through special guided tours of our *A Century in the Making: 100 Years of ASHM* exhibit at 11 am and 1 pm, and enjoy a special Swedish summer cake throughout the day. Tours and refreshments are included with regular admission.



Greta Garbo Film: "Queen Christina" Screening at Bryn Mawr Institute Tuesday, June 9th 7:00 pm

Join ASHM at the Bryn

Mawr Film Institute for to view the classic 1933 Greta Garbo film, "Queen Christina." The gender-bending Queen Christina of Sweden has always resisted marriage, but an encounter with a Spanish envoy forces her to weigh passion against duty to the throne. Packed with queer-coded sequences still possible in the Pre-Code era, this lavish costume drama features Greta Garbo at her most luminous and iconic. ASHM Curator Brett Peters will participate in a post-screening conversation. *Please Note: This program takes place at the Bryn Mawr Film Institute in Bryn Mawr, PA. Purchase tickets online.



Midsommarfest Saturday June 21st 4:00-7:00 pm

Please join us on Saturday, June 20th at 4 pm to hoist the maypole, dance in celebration, and eat smörgåstårter! Admission to the event includes traditional folk music by the Last Chance Duo, family activities, and full access to the Museum. Food and flower crowns will be available for purchase. \$8 members, \$12 non-members, \$5 children 5-12, children under 5 are free.



New Nordic Dinner Sunday, July 12th 6:00 pm

Join us for an evening of New Nordic cuisine at the American Swedish

Historical Museum, where culinary artistry meets natural simplicity. This special outdoor dinner experience features award-winning Swedish chef Ulrika Bengtsson, in collaboration with Jeffrey A. Miller Hospitality Group. The curated menu is rooted in Scandinavian culture. Showcasing natural ingredients, each dish highlights the simplicity and elegance that define Nordic cooking—from fresh herbs and foraged elements to locally sourced produce that celebrates nature, tradition, and innovation. Tickets go on sale at the end of May.

To Register For Events

call 215-389-1776, or visit online at

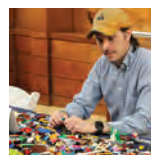
www.americanswedish.org/calendar.htm



Hemslöjd Straw Craft: Weave a Sweetheart Saturday, July 18th 12:00-3:00 pm

Straw craft has a long history in Sweden,

Scandinavia, and northern Europe. Try your hand at making a straw "sweetheart." Wheat weaver and museum researcher Kirsten Hansen Gyllenhaal will lead you through the project step-by-step. No previous experience is necessary. Consider inviting a friend to join in the fun! \$35 for members and \$45 for nonmembers.



Architecture & Building Free Family Day Sunday, August 9th 12:00-4:00 pm

From the Empire State Building to Mount

Rushmore to the Golden Gate Bridge, iconic landmarks across the United States were designed and built by Nordic immigrants. Bring the whole family to spend the afternoon completing building challenges and creating your own impressive structures with LEGOs (a Danish invention!) and other materials.



Crayfish Party Friday, August 21st 6:00 pm

Get a taste of Swedish summer at our annual Crayfish Party! Enjoy a

buffet of crayfish and Swedish meatballs, along with crisp bread, cheese, potatoes, cheese pie, and a glass of aquavit, all outside under our beautifully lit and decorated tent. \$60 for members, \$70 for non-members. Register by August 17th.



Scandinavia Fest Budd Lake, NJ Sunday, September 6th

Scanfest is back for 2026! Join ASHM for a full day of cultural celebration at

Vasa Park in Budd Lake, NJ. It's an all-day celebration of Scandinavia at its best, with food, crafts, performers, and more! For more information and to purchase advance tickets, visit www.scanfest.org.



Save the Date ASHM Centennial Gala Saturday, October 17th

Images from Recent Events

Photographs by ASHM Staff



▲ Families creating a collaborative mosaic piece at the March Free Community Day with SEAMAAC.



▲ Tommy McPherson, Finlandia Foundation National; Tracey Beck; Erik Muther, ASHM Board Chair; Ambassador Jarmo Sareva, Consul General of Finland in New York; Brett Peters; Stefan Hansen, Embassy of Sweden at the Taste to Tech opening



▲ Visitors painting flower pots at the March Free Community Day with SEAMAAC



▲ Little egg hunters at Easter Family Day



▲ Guests making Marimekko inspired screenprints at the exhibition opening.



▲ A guest adds toppings to her brunch waffle at the Live Mystery Theater Experience.



▲ Two guests looking at the SAAB display in the Taste to Tech exhibit.



▲ A volunteer serves semlor at Semlor and a Movie.



▲ Guests watch the interactive theater performance of Before the Door Opens in the Museum Grand Hall



▲ Attendees dancing the night away at the extrABBAganza! ABBA Dance Party



▲ Jazz & Other Soulful Sounds featuring the Jim Holton Trio at the opening of Taste to Tech

Contributions

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

New Members

February 1 – April 30, 2026

Sustaining

Nils Erickson

Organizational

Long Branch Library

Household

Laura Dishong
Beth Doreian
Michael Ernst
Alexander Jablovok
William King
Christine Kronenburg
Matt Moore
Robert Protesto
Larry Stolle
Elizabeth Torresson

Individual

Shanelle Griffin
Wendy Kaynor

Senior/Student

David Bachman
Valerie Costanzo
James Fredell
David Krueger
Carl Lillvik
Pamela Petersen
Bruce Ross

In Memorium

The ASHM community lost a very special member in the last few months. We send our condolences to their friends and family.

Diane Yocum

Contributions

February 1 – April 30, 2026

Serafimer (\$5K and above)

Anonymous
ASHM Auxiliary
Tracey & William Beck*
Görel Bengtson*
Scott Doyle
Kristina & John O'Doherty*
Eunice Winters*

Vasa

Greg Brown & Linton Stables
Kristina Hofmann*
Kristina & Charles Kalb
SWEA Philadelphia
Robert P. Thomas AIA
Rev. Dr. Kim-Eric Williams*

Gold

Christos Antoniadis,
in memory of Dr. Kristina Antoniadis
Ingrid Beery
Per Blomquist*
Jens & Allison Clausen

Silver

Anna-Lena Bromberg*

Bronze

Caroline Brady
Beverly Farrell,
in memory of Diane Yocum
Sara Joslin,
In celebration of the 100th Anniversary
Duane Malm
Andrea Mower,
in memory of Diane Yocum
Ann Charlotte Storer*

Friend

Nancy Balz
Karin Bergesen,
in memory of Dominic Sama
Elisabeth Brown,
in memory of Dominic Sama
Monica Fortune,
in memory of Dominic Sama
Diana Santillo,
in memory of Diane Yocum
Britt Winte,
in memory of Dominic Sama

**Contributions to the
Centennial Capital Campaign*

ASHM Oral History Project

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the American Swedish Historical Museum, we are launching an oral history project to collect and preserve personal stories from individuals closely involved with the Museum.

Through recorded interviews, participants are invited to share their reflections on the Museum's cultural significance, collections, and role in sustaining an engaged community. Firsthand accounts of memorable objects and exhibitions

may offer curatorial insights, while notable achievements and challenges could reveal behind-the-scenes anecdotes. We hope to explore the traditions and relationships that have guided the figurative and physical evolution of the Museum, as well as the ways in which it has remained unchanged.

Interviewees will include current and former staff, board members, volunteers, and those responsible for making an enduring impact on the history, development, and day-to-day operation of the Museum.

In addition to being made accessible online, these personal recollections will be integrated into the *100 Years in the Making* exhibition, highlighting the Museum's collections and impact through the lived experiences and diverse perspectives of members and staff.



Volunteer Opportunities at the ASHM



The American Swedish Historical Museum is always looking for new members. If you've taken part in any of our celebrations, you know what an exciting and vibrant museum you have in your own backyard. Museum membership provides you with a calendar of museum exhibits, historical and social events, language classes, and events for children. But there's more. There are two special organizations within the Museum that offer the chance to volunteer.

The Auxiliary

The Auxiliary began in 1935 and has a rich history of supporting the Museum. It hosts the ASHM Lucia Festival and Christmas Market (*Julmarknad*) in December, Semlor & a Movie in February, and various other events throughout the year. The group meets at 10:30am on the first Thursday of the month.

Midsommarklubben

Midsommarklubben is the Swedish-speaking volunteer group that hosts the annual ASHM Midsommarfest in June and makes and sells glögg in December. The group meets monthly and all meetings are conducted in Swedish.

These two groups enthusiastically welcome new members. Members have the opportunity to learn about Swedish and Nordic culture, including cooking, baking and serving authentic dishes for the Museum's many cultural events. Collaboration and celebration is what keeps the Museum alive. We welcome you to join our volunteer groups.

If interested, please contact the Museum at 215-389-1776 or info@americanswedish.org.



Donor Spotlight: A Legacy of Heritage, Community, and Giving Forward

That immersive experience abroad became a turning point—one that strengthened Karen's cultural roots and ultimately led her back to ASHM in a new way. "After returning from Sweden, I began at ASHM as a volunteer and, later, the Saturday employee, welcoming visitors and offering tours, på Svenska or English."

Her journey didn't stop there. "At the time, I could not have guessed that in 1985 I would become the IKEA Café and Swede Shop manager at the first IKEA in the US, in Plymouth Meeting." Drawing on authentic training and cultural knowledge, she helped bring Swedish food traditions to a broader audience. "Thanks to the initial trainings by 3 IKEA chefs, imported from Sweden for the benefit of restaurant employees and customers, we produced true-to-style, excellent food and coffee!"

Yet beyond the experiences and accomplishments, it's the relationships that have mattered most. "I made dear friends at ASHM over many years and continue those friendships through to today. They provided a shared cultural frame of reference and a familiar community...kindred spirits that I care about and can identify with."

It's this enduring sense of belonging that inspired her decision to become a Life Member. "Becoming a Life Member is a way of extending membership into the time when I will be able to participate in spirit only and that pleases me." Karen's choice is also a tribute to the generosity that shaped her path: "Just as my Aunt Evie's generosity was extended to me, I am passing it on in a meaningful and affordable way."

For Life Member Karen Lamberg Hilton, connection to her heritage has been a lifelong journey shaped by family, culture, and meaningful experiences at American Swedish Historical Museum.

"I received a small inheritance from an aunt who was also of Swedish heritage," Karen shares. "She knew of my appreciation for ASHM, my direct participation there during younger years, and continued interest." That connection ran deep. "We celebrated many Swedish holidays together and she was particularly enthusiastic and supportive during my 2 years in Stockholm where I worked for a family as their *barnflicka* (nanny) in order to explore our family genealogy in Sweden, Norway and Finland."

Why Become a Life Member?

Life Membership is more than a status—it's a lasting commitment to preserving culture, supporting community, and ensuring that future generations can experience the same sense of connection and discovery. Like Karen, you can turn appreciation into legacy. Her story is a reminder that heritage is not just something we inherit—it's something we nurture, share, and pass on.

Join her in making that commitment today. Visit americanswedish.org/support



1900 Pattison Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19145
215.389.1776
www.americanswedish.org

 americanswedish
 @americanswedish

**Connecting
Cultures and
Community**

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Philadelphia, PA
Permit No. 1350

Cheers to 20 Years: Tracey Beck's Inspiring Impact



This year, we proudly celebrate the 20th anniversary of Tracey Beck's service as our Executive Director. Over the past two decades, her leadership has shaped the American Swedish Historical Museum into a vibrant, inclusive, and forward-thinking cultural institution.

Under Tracey's guidance, the Museum has broadened its interpretive lens, ensuring that Swedish history is presented not in isolation, but as part of a rich tapestry of global migration stories.

This thoughtful approach has welcomed new audiences, deepened community relevance, and strengthened the Museum's role as a place of connection and dialogue.

Organizational growth during this period has been equally remarkable. During her tenure, the American Swedish Historical Museum was named Best Museum in Philadelphia four times in five years by two separate publications!

This growing recognition and popularity were driven in large part by the strategic partnerships Tracey cultivated. Collaborations with the Jeffrey Miller Hospitality Group transformed the Museum into a sought-after wedding and event venue, while participation in the Philadelphia Flower Show elevated its public profile. Innovative initiatives—such as hosting saunas on the Museum's terrace—introduced entirely new audiences to the institution.

At the heart of Tracey's leadership is a deep commitment to people. She has fostered meaningful relationships across communities, building bridges that extend far beyond the Museum's walls. As a mentor, she has nurtured the growth of emerging professionals, offering guidance, encouragement, and opportunities that have shaped countless careers. Tracey's belief in others has created a ripple effect—strengthening both the institution and the broader museum field.

As we reflect on the past 20 years, we celebrate a leader whose impact cannot be measured solely in programs or attendance numbers, but in the lives touched, the stories elevated, and the community strengthened. Tracey is currently the longest serving Executive Director of the American Swedish Historical Museum, and we look forward to her continued legacy of leadership, innovation, and inspiration in the years ahead!