

Order of Runeberg and Swede Hall

By Maureen Smith, February 17, 2009

Johan Ludwig Runeberg, regarded as Finland's greatest poet and author of the Finnish National Anthem was born in 1804. His parents came from Sweden and settled in Finland as did many others. This explains the beginnings of the Swedish speaking Finn. Johan had a PhD degree and taught Latin and Greek in Colleges. "Vartland," his patriotic verse ranks among the world's greatest works. There are many data base collections called alko. The June Pelo collection contains the surname Fagernas. There were many Order of Runeberg started. And there are many still in existence today. The main goal is to keep the Swedish Finn culture alive and to help communities in any way they can.

In 1895 a one-room schoolhouse was built and another in 1912 called Riverside. There were two churches within a mile of each other, one Finnish, the other Swedish. The Finnish church was across from the Erickson farm.

In 1911 a Swedish Finnish Temperance Union was formed in Independence and they built a meeting house on Independence Road. They sold the hall to the Order of Runeberg and it became know as Swede Hall. In 1912 Alfred Erickson and Margaret Forsman were married in this hall. In 1996 the Erickson farm was put on the Thurston County Historical record and in 1997 it was 100 years old.

In 1935 the Order of Runeberg bought two acres on Albany Street. They bought two old warehouses in Malone, tore them down and hauled the lumber to Albany Street. They also tore down Swede Hall on Independence Road and hauled it to Albany Street. They built a building 50 X 125 feet long. It was finished in 1939. The joists for the dance floor were 5 X 24 inches and 30 feet long. Total cost for the land and buildings was \$5,000. In four years it was all paid off. In 1935 there were 140 members and in 1950 there were 177. After 44 years and the loss of members the order decided to sell he hall to the Grand Mound Citizens Group for \$25,000 at 8% interest, 15 year payoff, \$500 down in 90 days. In 1978 Floyd Moritz made to motion and Roberta Oviatt seconded it to purchase the hall. It was later discussed and moved that \$30,00 in bonds be sold, 1000 \$50 bonds and 200 \$25 bonds. A copy of the bondholders used to hang in the hall. Where is the copy now?

In May 1978, the Articles of Incorporation was sent to the IRS for income tax exemption. In October the Title Insurance for the hall was received from Att. Larry Fagerness and put in a safe place. Where is the safe place?

The data on the Order of Runeberg was found on the web. The early history of Swede Hall was from the Swedish Finn Historical Society, and the later history of Swede Hall was obtained from the records of minutes of meetings at Swede Hall.