

## *Julbocks, Tomtes & Glögg, Oh My! Are You Sure We're In Kansas Anymore?*

After living many years in a northern urban area and being subjected to boundless Christmas parades and events, my family had no idea what to expect from a small town celebration. We had moved to Lindsborg, Kansas and were expecting no bells and whistles, some holiday lights and call it good. Not in Lindsborg. Settled by Swedish immigrants, who felt deeply about religion, art, music and education, Lindsborg today upholds ancestor traditions throughout the year. However, by embracing the folklore and artistic side of Sweden, combined with Kansas hospitality, this town shines at Christmas.

The epiphany came the first weekend in December when the Jultide concert, featuring the Bethany College Choir, started the holiday season. "After hearing the Bethany Choir, one can say that Lindsborg is choral country" said Philip Brunelle, Pearson Symposium Concert. Bethany College Choir and the Handbell Ensemble come together annually for an evening of choral art. Hymns, special choral arrangements and readings lead the audience through the Christian Christmas story.

A favorite Swedish holiday tradition is tied to the saintly figure of Lucia. Lucia arrives on the Winter Solstice, an emblem of light and comfort with candles in her hair and food in her hands. Lindsborg honors Lucia's sacrifice and martyrdom on the second weekend in December. The day begins with Swedish folk dancing downtown. A processional of girls in white carrying candles and *stjärngosse* (star boys) lead the crowd to the Bethany Lutheran Church where the town crowns a local Lucia. She wears a white gown with a red sash and a crown of lingonberry branches with seven lit candles. The green and light represent life in the winter. The new Lucia goes amongst the crowd and serves ginger cookies.

*Julbocks* and *tomtes* exist in abundance. If you look around Lindsborg, the *julbock* (Christmas goat) will be hanging from most Christmas trees to stand watch over the presents to make sure no mischief is performed. The *tomtes* (Scandinavian Santa-like figures) peek out from their hiding places. Be sure to leave a bowl of rice pudding with a large slab of butter on top out for him Christmas Eve to appease his naughty nature.

Christmas in Lindsborg means food. Lingonberries, *pepparkakor* (ginger cookies), *ostkaka* (cheese cake), *krans* (tea rings), *glögg* (mulled wine), *lussekatter* (saffron buns), *lutefisk* (dried cod), *fruktsoppa* (fruit soup), *Spritsar* cookies, *potatiskorv* (potato sausage), *rågbröd* (rye bread), *kringlor* (pastry), *kardemumma fläta* (cardamom braids) and *skorpor* (rusks) are some of the treats prepared at local restaurants and bakeries. If you are lucky you may be invited into a local home for Swedish egg coffee and have *fika* (coffee break with a sweet treat).

The Swedish immigrants who founded Lindsborg were determined to keep their Scandinavian heritage, but they also were extremely delighted to be Swedish Americans. The Old Mill museum presents an old fashioned prairie Christmas the first two weekends in December. Concerts, one act plays, crafts for children to make, Santa, refreshments and the traditional story told by the shepherd in the stable are events that can be enjoyed by everyone.

Keeping with the holiday concept of sharing, Lindsborg artists open their studios to the public the first weekend in December. This highly anticipated bi-annual event abounds with artists, both local and regional. Experience art being created in central Kansas and meet the artists. Lindsborg boasts of 60 working art studios and galleries throughout the area.

The annual Snowflake Parade is held also the first weekend in December and is for children of all ages. Don't just come and watch, plan to be in the parade. All angels, Santas, snowballs, elves, bells, snowflakes and ballerinas are welcome. And do not forget to join in with community carol sing.

The holidays culminate with a Swedish-style Christmas candlelit morning *Julotta* (Christmas morning church service) at Bethany Lutheran Church founded and built in 1869, designed similarly to rural churches in southern Sweden. *Julotta* starts at 6:00 a.m. and is performed in Swedish with an English interpreter.

Lindsborg is a small town with large amenities. Charming B&Bs, affordable motels, shopping, massage, dining, free WiFi at various locations, newly refurbished City Hall with state of the art meeting facilities, artisan coffee roastery, a heritage museum and art galleries. Lindsborg is a destination for *all* seasons, but the Christmas season is truly special.

By Tricia Clark

Submitted by the Lindsborg Convention & Visitors Bureau