



FOR THE HEART, MIND, & SPIRIT

TWINFLOWER

Newsletter of Linnaeus Arboretum

CELEBRATING LINNAEUS ARBORETUM'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

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LINNAEUS ARBORETUM MISSION STATEMENT

"The mission of the Gustavus Adolphus College Linnaeus Arboretum is to facilitate environmental education and enhance the application of environmental ethics for all areas of study. The Arboretum provides the College and community a living sanctuary of plants for education, environmental stewardship, reflection, and recreation."

Little Cabin on the Prairie

BOB DOUGLAS, Gustavus professor of geography

Like Lake Wobegon, it is on the edge of the prairie. I'm referring to the Borgeson family log cabin, which sits on the edge of the Uhler Prairie in Linnaeus Arboretum.

How did this log cabin come to be located here?

To help celebrate the 125th anniversary of Gustavus, then-President John Kendall asked if I knew of the existence of a Swedish log cabin that could be moved to campus. It would serve primarily as a memorial to those Swedish settlers who supported the College in its early years. I had just completed a survey of pioneer log buildings in the area with two students, Greg Seamon '80 and Kristin Nelson '82, so I had no hesitation in recommending the Borgeson cabin. The old building still stood on the family farm near Norseland, Minn., albeit in a state of disrepair and much-needed restoration. The College made arrangements to purchase the cabin, and on June 25,

1986, it was moved to a location near the north wetlands. It stayed at this site until March of 1998, when it was damaged by the tornado and was subsequently moved to its new location near the Uhler Prairie and restored. The backyard pioneer garden, much like what the Borgesons had, came later.

Carl and Clara Borgeson immigrated to the Norseland area from Nykadol, Sweden, in 1866. Carl had served with the Union Army in the Civil War and as military payment acquired a tract of land here. The 1870 federal manuscript census shows Carl, age 44, and Clara, age 42, with 5 children: Augusta (15), Charles

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Borgeson Cabin in Winter | Photo by Joel Jackson

Little Cabin on the Prairie *continued*

(13), August (10), Frank (8), and Anna (5 mos). Carl Jr., who was born later and was alive when the cabin was moved, told me that at one time his parents and eight children, plus a hired hand, lived in the cabin together.

Two Gustavus geography students, Julie Byrne '87 and Chris Rosin '88, and I, assisted by my daughter, Kim Douglas Land, began restoration work on the cabin during the summer of 1986. It was first placed on six concrete pilings with a fieldstone foundation added. The original chinking—the material which was stuffed between the logs to keep out wind, rain, and snow, consisting of manure, mud, straw, marsh grass, corn cobs, sticks, and pages from Swedish language newspapers—was removed and replaced by a mesh screen and mortar. The original floor boards, stained with time, were turned over. The inside walls were also re-chinked, then whitewashed. Wooden shingles were put on the roof and custom-made windows were installed. The only concession to authenticity was that, for fear of a possible fire, the chimney was removed.

One of the oldest forms of rural houses in Sweden was the *stuga*. It became common on farms in the 1700s and 1800s. Rectangular in floor plan, it had an entrance door on one long side and a small storage room or kitchen adjacent to the *stuga*, the all-purpose room. In its floor plan and in utilizing the distinctive dove-tail

notching common to Scandinavian log buildings, the Borgeson cabin is similar to the *stuga*. In summary, not only does the Borgeson cabin serve as a testament to early Swedish immigration to the prairie area, but it is also representative of a classic Swedish log building.



Borgeson Cabin at dusk | Photo by Joel Jackson