

# Vår Historia

## SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



**PUBLISHED  
BI-MONTHLY**



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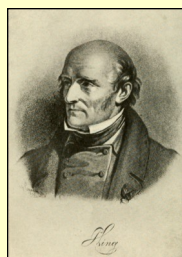
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### LING AUDITORIUM, BETHANY'S TEMPLE

Memories still linger of that 1946 Sunday the last day of March, when Bethany College's gymnasium named Ling took it's last breath while engulfed in flames.

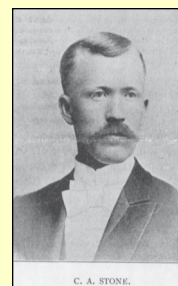
By 1895, the Messiah Festival had grown tremendously, and the college desperately needed a gymnasium for it's students. Dr. Carl Swensson, President of Bethany College, pleaded with the Board of Directors to fund building a structure that would serve both needs. While they approved the idea, they would not approve the overseeing nor funding. Dr. Swensson took matters in his own hands and in July of that year formed the Ling Auditorium Committee, later called Ling Association. Why the name Ling? Since Messiah Festival was about one week long, the full time purpose would be a gymnasium, and who better to name it after than the founder of modern gymnastics.

Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839) was born in Småland, a province in southern Sweden. His school and teachings in Stockholm developed what we now call calisthenics. Before his death from Tuberculosis, he prepared three men, one being his son, to take over the school and continue



his practices, ensuring his legacy. Another interesting fact is Ling's great-great grandfather on his mother's side, Olaus Rudbeck, discovered the human lymphatic system. Great scientific minds ran in the family.

The goal Dr. Swensson set to build was limited from July to October, as the auditorium would be the location for the big Oct. 3rd and 4th Fore Father's and Patriotic Day celebration. Prof. C.A. Stone was placed in charge of the project, and donated some of the lumber. The rest came from Smith Lumber Co. in Minneapolis, MN at a greatly reduced price.



Placing Ling's location near the railroad tracks proved beneficial for not only unloading all material to build, but throughout its history providing visitors to the many events held in it. In Swedish fashion, the architect came up with a design that, (1) didn't take up a lot of space, and (2) held a large number of people. Its design was hexadecagon, or 16 sided, with doors placed fully around for safety.

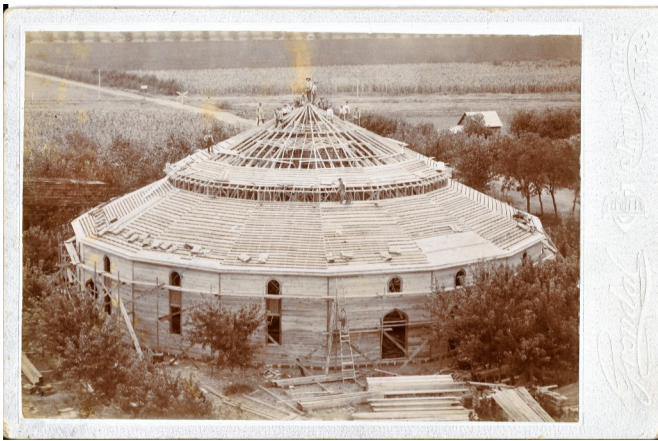


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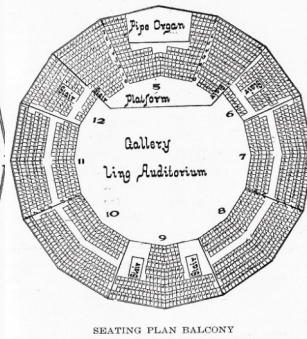
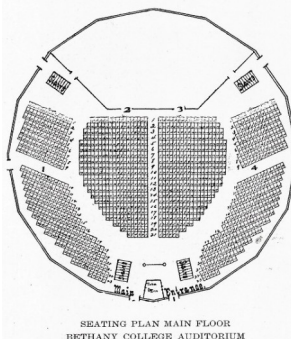
## LING AUDITORIUM – BETHANY'S TEMPLE

The right contractors for the job could only be the Palmquist Brothers from Lindsborg, but help came as far as Salina to build this work of art. The 16-sided structure measured just 110 feet wall to wall across in any direction, and the dome reached 38 feet from the floor. Windows and six double doors were placed all the way around, for light, fresh air, and safety.

*This Gröndal photo shows 14 workers on the roof and one boy on the ladder.*



The all wood structure when finished was painted on the outside in soft colors, the interior was all hard Pine and finished with shellac. With seats removed, 4,000 people could fit in there. As set up, there were 2,800 seats with room for another 200 if needed. The stage seated 350 and the first pipe organ came from Jackson Pipe Organ Co. out of Washington, Iowa. There were also two pianos, one a grand, situated on the platform. Professor Grafstrom hand painted the seals of the USA and Sweden, as well as portraits of President Cleveland, Gov. Morrill, and King Oscar of Sweden, each of which donated a flag.



Because of the savings on lumber, the total cost for Ling Auditorium was \$4,000. Two months after completion, Dr. Swensson talked to M.P. Moller of Hagerstown, MD during Christmas and asked about donating a pipe organ grand enough for the largest music conservatory in the west. By February, a three manual pipe organ valued at \$5,000 was being delivered. The arrangement was Moller donate \$2,700 outright, \$2,000 with conditions, and Dr. Swensson pay the \$300 freight and then set it up. To put this organ in perspective, the width, when assembled was 24 feet. It was to be dedicated April 3rd, just in time for the 1896 Messiah chorus.

Ling provided much more than college activities, when not used it was rented out for political mass meetings, religious gatherings, community theater, 4th of July celebrations, etc.



It had space for men and women classes in Gymnastics and Physical Culture, and provided free baths for students rooming in the College Building or Ladies' Hall, for other students a \$1 one-time fee secured that privilege for as long as they were enrolled. When Presser Hall came in 1929, Ling's duties reduced to only the gymnasium. Until that tragic day in 1946, Ling remained a wondrous structure that most towns only dreamt of having. A Salina journalist wrote about Ling, calling it "Bethany's Temple" and describing it as a "Poem in Wood".

Elly and Robert remember that day Ling burned, both as young kids. They watched their dad, Emery Ahlstedt, carry a fire hose into the flames, not knowing if it was their last time ever seeing him. It wasn't, no lives were lost that tragic day. *(Be sure to look for an accompaniment folder for this issue on our Facebook page.)*

Coronado Heights  
Park

T-Shirts



Mugs



LOOK,  
It's Holly  
from  
Lindsborg CVB

# Makes Great Gifts!

Available at:

**Old Mill Museum**

**120 E. Mill St.**

**Lindsborg, KS**



Smoky Valley  
Historical Association

Shipping/handling fee applies if mailed, Call 785-227-3595 for quote

## SVHA PROGRAMS FOR EARLY 2020

**Jan. 14th, 2020**

"Swedish Settlements",  
*Presented by Tom Holmquist.*

**March 10th, 2020**

"Who is A.R.? Presenting the Slöjd Craft and other crafts at Bethany College". *Presented by Dr. Marlasue Esping Holmquist.*

**May 12th, 2020**

"History and Stories of the Smoky Valley Roller Mill"  
*Presented by Lorna Nelson, Director.*

*All Tuesday programs start at 7:30 pm*

**Bethany Home Activity Center—321 N. Chestnut St.**

Please cut along the dotted line

**Smoky Valley Historical Association**  
**P.O. Box 255**  
**Lindsborg, KS. 67456**

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year**



Smoky Valley Historical Association is a non-profit organization and is registered under 501(c)3

All Membership Donations, Bequests, Trusts, and Legacy Donations are tax deductible.

Please mail to P.O. Box listed above.  
**Thank You!**





## SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tim Stewart - *President, Newsletter*  
 Robert Ahlstedt - *Vice-President*  
 Julie-Ann Neywick - *Secretary*  
 Lenora Lynam - *Treasurer*  
 Elly Ostlind - *Program Chair*  
 Leland Nelson  
 Jim Malm  
 Matt Stula  
 Chester G. Peterson - *Emeritus*  
 Duane Fredrickson - *Emeritus*

Interested?

We have one BOD position open.

### Meetings

We have bi-monthly meetings from September thru May and held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at Bethany Home. All meetings are in the Activities Room. There are five meetings per academic year (Sept.-May). Program starts at 7:30 p.m. with topics of local historical interest. Come join us!



### Funding

Membership contributions are the SVHA's major source of on-going funding. A free-will donation in any amount will secure your membership in the Association for the year. Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year.

Grants, such as those awarded by the Kansas Humanities Council, are also available from time-to-time to further the mission of the SVHA.

### Smoky Valley Historical Mission

*The purpose of this association shall be to collect, arrange and preserve historical data, books, pamphlets and manuscripts pertaining to the early history and settlement of our valley in general and the City of Lindsborg in particular; to preserve and beautify places of historical interest in our city, its vicinity, and properties entrusted to the association; and to promote the study of history of our settlement and its cultural growth by lectures and other available means.*

### Contact info:

e-mail us at:

[info@lindsborghistory.org](mailto:info@lindsborghistory.org)

or mail to:

Smoky Valley Historical  
Association, Inc.

PO Box 255

Lindsborg, KS 67456

Check our Facebook page for the most up-to-date information concerning the Smoky Valley Historical Association.

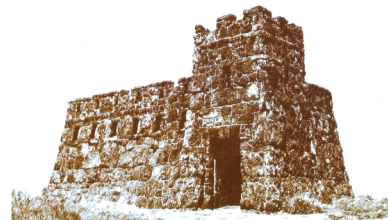


*Thank you for your contributions, and supporting the historical preservation of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley of Central Kansas.*

*Our pioneers left their legacy long after they were gone, so can you. Managing estates, bequests, and gifts through retirement plans can help keep our preservation ongoing and long-lasting.*

Is a member of the SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, Inc. which has headquarters in Lindsborg, Kansas	
Was born in a log cabin	( )
Was born in Sweden	( )
Great-grandparents came from Sweden	( )
Forefathers were here before the Swedes	( )
Great-grandparents homesteaded in the Valley	( )
Attended one-room school	( )
Attended Bethany	( )
Has worked at The Old Mill in operation	( )
Has sung in the Messiah Chorus	( )

TACK SÅ MYCKET!



SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
LINDSBORG, KANSAS 67456