

Livsreise spotlights area's Norwegian heritage

By Sam Martino
Special to the Lakes Edition

Since it opened in May 2015, the Life's Journey Norwegian Center in

Stoughton has attracted thousands of visitors curious about the wave of Norwegian immigrants who came to the area between 1825 and 1910.

The center displays artifacts of Norwegian immigrants and stories of their cultural heritage.

The center attempts to replicate the story of the

life immigrants had in the old country and their new homeland, then called the Koshkonong Prairie.

From stories about farmers to wagon builders, the center, called Livsreise, provides a glimpse of life of this country's new homesteaders, farmers, craftsmen and artisans.

There's the story of Ole Evinrude, who became fascinated with engines as a youth while aboard a ship to America in 1877 from Gjøvik, Norway, the sister city of Stoughton.

Evinrude, who lived in nearby Cambridge, "had the idea for a motor while attempting to bring ice cream to his future wife by rowboat" on a nearby lake. "By the time he rowed back, the ice cream had melted," the story goes at one display at the museum.

Thus, the idea for the "Evinrude" engine to replace the oars was born.

Targe G. Mandt from

Telemark, Norway, started a successful wagon-building business in the mid-1800s in Pleasant Springs that reached from Wisconsin to Minnesota and Iowa.

Ironically, Stoughton is now home to a major truck body firm linked to its name, Stoughton Trailers.

The story of Christopher Olson Olaus, who became a member of the

Wisconsin 3rd Regiment that fought in the U.S. Civil War, is featured in another exhibit.

Other stories told in various exhibits are linked to customs of food, dress, entertainment, agriculture and mythology, such as the tales of trolls.

With Wisconsin's snowy winters resembling parts

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Above and right: Inside the colorful, interesting and educational Norwegian Heritage Center (a.k.a. Livsreise) in Stoughton. (Photos courtesy of Livsreise)



Cooksville's ample history showcased in guide

Adapted from press release from Cooksville Community Center, Inc.

Cooksville's rich history and significant historic structures and sites are the focus of a four-color booklet available for purchase.

Published in 2014, "Historic Cooksville, a Guide," briefly covers the settling of the historic village and the surrounding area when Easterners purchased land south of Stoughton from Sen. Daniel Webster and the federal government.

The 44-page soft-cover guide features 50 recent photos and descriptions of the Cooksville area's handsome homes and historic sites, most of which were built in the mid- to late-1800s. Also included are short vignettes on some of Cooksville's most notable persons and significant events.

In 1840 brothers John and Daniel Cook – after whom Cooksville was named – purchased property along the now Badfish Creek. When they platted their land west of what is now Highway 138, they named it Cooksville.

Shortly thereafter, New Englander John Porter acquired acreage east of Highway 138 from Webster. He named his

platted area Waucoma. Later, both villages became known as Cooksville because that was where the post office was located.

Over the years, many wood-frame and vermilion brick homes and other structures were built. In the late 1800s, Cooksville had a population of more than 170. Now, about 70 people reside in Cooksville. The original Cook home, built in 1842 and restored in 1981, is still a residence.

All historic sites are numbered and keyed to two maps in the guide, facilitating a walking or driving tour.

The guide, published by the Cooksville Community Center, Inc. – a non-profit serving resi-

dents of Cooksville and the surrounding area – can be purchased for \$10 at the Cooksville Country Store, 11313 N. State Hwy. 138.

Printing and other expenses were paid for with individual donations. All proceeds from the sale of the guide go to Cooksville Community Center, Inc., and are earmarked for other center-related projects.

Cooksville historian Larry Reed edited the guide. Lisa Imhoff was the graphic designer. Vicki Ballweg created the

maps and Steve Ehle was the photographer. All are Cooksville or Cooksville area residents.

The guide is based upon the National Register of Historic Places and State Register of Historic Places nominations of the Cooksville Historic District (1973) and of the Thematic Resources of the Cooksville Area (1980), and upon material from the Cooksville Archives and the Rock County Historical Society.

The first guide to Cooksville was published in 1982.



The Longbourne House, one of many historic homes in Cooksville. (Photo from "Historic Cooksville, a Guide")

Gather in Cooksville for these coming events

The Village of Cooksville, located in Rock County's Town of Porter, is celebrating its dodransbicentennial in 2017. In simpler, less tongue-twisting terms, the village is turning 175 years old. Several events this summer and fall will be focusing on that year-long birthday party. You'll find a detailed listing of those and other Cooksville community events here. The information has been adapted from the Cooksville-themed blog, cooksvillenews.blogspot.com.

•Wednesday, June 7: **Stoughton Chamber Singers Concert**, Congregational Church, corner of State Road 59 and Highway 138, 7-9 p.m. John Beutel and the Singers return for a concert of American music in honor of Cooksville's dodransbicentennial. Tickets, costing \$5, are available from McGlynn's Pharmacy in Stoughton, from the Singers, or at the door. Proceeds benefits the singers and Cooksville Community Center, Inc. (CCC). A reception will follow at the schoolhouse, located on the corner of Highway 59 and Church Street.

•Saturday, June 10: **Celebrating Cooksville's History with Jerry Apps and Larry Reed**, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., old Cooksville schoolhouse (now CCC), corner of Highway 59 and Church Street. Features a presentation about one-room schoolhouses and barns by well-known Wisconsin historian and author Jerry Apps, whose work is featured on Wisconsin Public Television. Larry Reed, historian and chair of the Historic Cooksville Trust, will then share highlights of 175 years of Cooksville history, drawing from a rich collection of documents, photos and anecdotes. Reed will also conduct a walking tour of Cooksville after the presentation. A sack lunch is included in the ticket price. Tickets are \$12. Limited seating available.

•Tuesday, July 4: **Independence Day Picnic**, 12:30-2:30 p.m., village commons area, corner of Highway 59 and Church Street. Generations of

Cooksvillians gather every July 4th under the oaks with picnic baskets for a community meal, and perhaps some softball. Rain location is the schoolhouse.

•Saturday, July 22: **Art in the Park**, 10-4 p.m., village commons. Art and crafts vendors, a classic car show, activities like horseshoes and sack races, food carts and more. There will be celebratory fun for the whole family.

•Saturday, July 22: **Tours of the Cooksville Masonic Lodge**, Cooksville Store, 11313 N. State Hwy. 138. The lodge is located in the store's upstairs. Lodge members will be discussing the importance of the Free Masons Society over the last century and a half.

•Saturday, Aug. 12: **Christmas in Summer Program**, 1:30-3 p.m., old schoolhouse. Some good old-fashioned schoolhouse fun with a cast of unlikely characters. See website for more details as event approaches. Free admission.

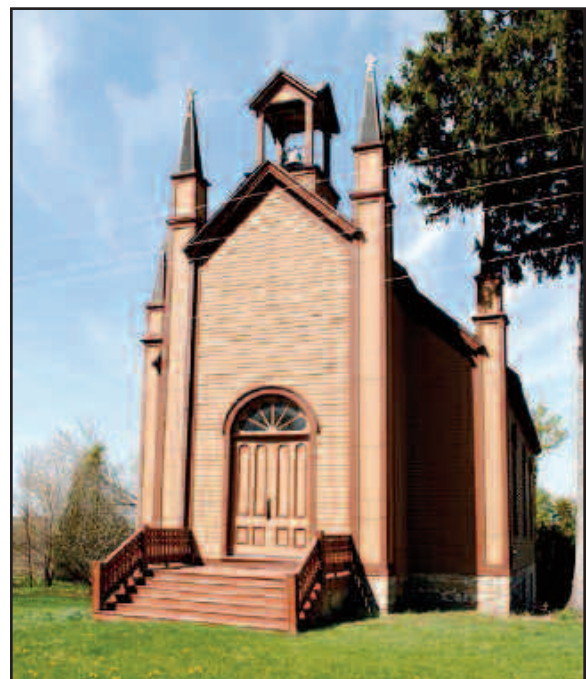
•Sunday, September (date TBA): **Cooksville Lutheran Church Fall Festival**, 11927 W. Church St., 11 a.m.-3 p.m. This festival heralds the colorful harvest season in the village. The event begins after Sunday services and features a quilt raffle, silent auction, food, a farmer's market, lively musical entertainment, and more.

•Monday, Sept. 18: **Cooksville Community Center Annual Meeting**, 6:30-8:30 p.m., old schoolhouse. In this special 175th year of the village, all are encouraged to come and enjoy hearing the news of the past year from Cooksville Community Center members, meet with neighbors, and share ice cream.

•Saturday, Oct. 21: **Cooksville Halloween Party**, 6:30-9 p.m., old schoolhouse. At this annual costume party, you never know what to expect after dark, but for sure there will be fall fun for the whole family. Bring a snack, beverage, dessert, and a ghost story to share.



The Cooksville General Store is, perhaps, Cooksville's foremost landmark. (Photo from "Historic Cooksville, a Guide")



The historic Cooksville Congregational Church. (Photo from "Historic Cooksville, a Guide")