

The Manassas Viking Festival

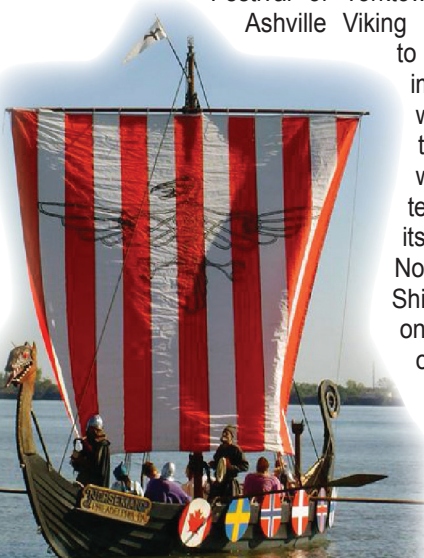
Viking - To leave one's homeland for profit abroad. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

As we all see every day, our region has become vastly more diverse. People from around the country and the world now call Virginia home thanks to the growth of Northern Virginia. Here in Manassas, we celebrate a host of annual events that highlight our respective ancestral roots. There is a Greek Festival, (September), Latino Festival, (also in September, more on this next month), St. Patrick's Parade (March) and the Viking Festival in May.

The Manassas Viking Festival is the brainchild of Erna Hákonardóttir Pomrenke and Susie Fosaaen. Erna was born and raised in Iceland but has lived in Manassas for 30 years and sits on the boards of the Icelandic Association of Washington D.C. and the Icelandic National League of North America. Susie Fosaaen is a board member of The Sons of Norway in Fairfax, and her paternal grandparents emigrated from Norway. The two ladies met at a social gathering between the two Nordic clubs, and by the end of the day, the Manassas Viking Festival was born. They chose Manassas as the place to host this event and the inaugural event, held May 12, 2018, exceeded everyone's wildest dreams!

An estimated crowd of more than 4,000 people came to Manassas on a picture-perfect day last May to learn, explore, and shop for all things Scandinavian. The festival is a family-friendly event that teaches about the Norse Vikings in an entertaining and educational way. People who went off raiding in ships were said to be "going Viking," but the Vikings were so much more. They were skilled seafaring explorers, craftsmen, poets, and writers. Their ships were the fastest of their time.

The coup de grace of last year's event was the arrival of the Viking Ship replica "The Norseman," and we are happy to announce it will be back. The ship is owned by Leif Ericson Viking Ship, Inc. of Philadelphia, and The Norseman travels around the country to events such as Scandifest in NJ, Scandinavian Festival of Yorktown, NY, and the



The Norseman. Owned by Leif Ericson Viking Ship Inc.

Ashville Viking Festival in Ohio to allow people to imagine what it was like sailing the difficult seas with the sleekest technology of its time. The Norseman Viking Ship will be loaded on a trailer and once again travel down I-95 from Philadelphia to Manassas for the event.

A larger Viking reenactment presence will

be on display this year with more period tents and displays. Living historians will demonstrate combat skills, including a shield wall and how people lived 1,000 years ago. The Vikings will host an "Althing," the first form of a modern-day parliament, and the general public is invited to participate. The Norwegian horse and the Icelandic horses that were such a big crowd pleaser last year will be back. The lively Crossjacks musical band from Tennessee was a huge hit and will be back, as will the Nordic Dancers of Washington, DC, and the Phoenix Irish Dancers.



The Crossjacks

The Icelandic Roots Genealogy Ancestry Database will be back. For those who have Icelandic heritage, the group recommends signing up for free on "Cousins Across the Ocean" via Icelandicroots.com prior to the

Viking Festival to be able to utilize their service.

New this year is the "Val-Howl-A Hall," a Viking breed dog show. Jo-Ann Secondino of Fox Meadow Icelandic Sheepdogs and one Crazy Cute Chinook is organizing this fun event. Here you will get to meet and greet the Nordic dogs the Vikings used, including Icelandic Sheepdog and the Norwegian Buhund. Both are all-around farm and herding dogs and family pets often seen accompanying their horse-riding owners. Also featured will be the Swedish Valhund, a rugged cattle dog, the Norbottenspets, small hunting dogs from Sweden and Finland, and the Norwegian Elkhound, used for hunting and herding. The Lundehund or Puffin dog is a small breed and is used, as the name indicates, to assist with hunting for puffins, a small bird that is part of Iceland's national diet.



Iris, purebred Icelandic Sheep Dog

This year's event on Saturday, May 11, in Historic Downtown promises to be even bigger and better. There will be lots of activity from the Harris Pavilion to the Manassas Museum Lawn and everywhere in between. The Viking Festival is very choosy about its vendors, who must produce or bring authentic Viking-era or Scandinavian-themed items, which makes this event so unique and fresh. Vendors come from up and down the Atlantic seaboard and as far away as New Mexico and Colorado. As the Manassas Viking Festival will take place the day before Mother's Day, it would only be appropriate to host a "Wife Carrying Race." The lucky winners will win a nice bouquet of flowers.

Please come out to Manassas and celebrate your real (or imaginary) Viking heritage and enhance the mood by dressing as a Viking.

SKOLI!



Doug Horhota