



RÖRSTRAND'S 1995 CHRISTMAS PLATE

One Christmas tradition that many Swedes and Swedish-Americans look forward to with fervent anticipation is the release each year of the annual Christmas plate by the top Swedish porcelain maker Rörstrand. This year's plate is, as usual, a real work of art, featuring a theme taken from a well-loved children's story.

In her book "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils", Selma Lagerlöf describes the geography of Sweden and relates local legends. Forgotten by the lead goose, Akka, and her flock, Nils flies to Härjedalen province on the back of the raven Bataki. During the journey, Bataki tells of the wolves of Sonfjället and of the iron-making contests at the Kolslätt forge.

Gunnar Nylund weaves all this together in this year's Christmas plate motif, along with the churches of Älvro and Vemdalen. In the border Nylund combines decorative ornaments, tools from the crest of Härjedalen, and the *Mosippa*, or Pasque-flower, the Härjedalen province flower.

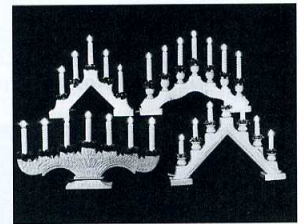
For more information on the Rörstrand Christmas 1995 plate, contact the ASI Museum Shop, 2600 Park Ave., Minneapolis, MN, 55407, phone 612-871-3004, or see your local Scandinavian gift shop.

ELECTRIC CANDELABRA

One very traditional item that is an integral part of a Swedish Christmas is the Advent candelabra. Usually, of course, these are made of wood, and come in various sizes to hold 5 to 9 candles. They add light and warmth to the long, dark Swedish winters, and every Swedish home has several of them.

Starting in the mid 1930's, electrified candelabra were first offered on the Swedish market by Philips Lighting. Modern new designs came along, including futuristic metal shapes characteristic of what was called "Scandinavian Modern." But the traditional wood designs held their own, and are still very popular today. Annual sales of these electric candelabra in Sweden run better than 700,000, which means that approximately one of every 10 Swedes buys one of these each year.

These electrified wooden candelabra are made from Swedish pine, and are available in several designs. They are available from Kron Enterprises, PO Box 348, Canastota, NY, 13032-0348, or call toll-free, 1-800 447-6011.



CHRISTMAS STRAW GOATS

A popular Christmas decoration in many Swedish homes is the *julbock*, or Christmas goat, made of straw and bound in bright red ribbon. This hand-crafted goat lends Christmas spirit to the home, but few people remember what this figure has to do with Christmas.

During the 1800s children in rural areas of Sweden made goats of straw which they would place anonymously at the homes of friends, usually as the bearer of teasing or needling poems. If one looks far enough back in history, you find that the goat represented the earthly incarnation of the devil himself, and therefore the goat figure was an invitation to allusions that were not always within the realm of respectable decorum.

Today, however, the Christmas goat has become something of a Swedish Rudolph-the-red-nosed-reindeer, in that he is looked upon as *Jultomten's* (Father Christmas) helper in delivering Christmas gifts.

These straw goats are hand-made by Göinge Halmslöjd (Göinge Strawcrafters) in Osby, Sweden, and are extremely handsome and well made. They come in three sizes: small, medium and large, priced respectively at \$21.50, \$68.00, and \$84.00, plus shipping. The ASI Museum Shop at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis is the exclusive U.S. distributor of the beautiful Göinge *julbock*. Contact: ASI Museum Shop, 2600 Park Ave., Minneapolis, MN, 55407. Telephone 612-871-3004.

CHRISTMAS GNOMES

Christmas in Sweden is not complete without these traditional gnomes or elves (*jultomtar*) to help out. In olden times, it was believed that gnomes inhabited each farmstead. The *tomte* was always an old man, about 2 to 3 feet tall, dressed in rough, gray clothes with a pointed red hat on his head, and one had to placate him to assure continued good fortune. Traditionally, a bowl of porridge with a "butter-eye" in it was set out for the tomte on Christmas night.

These finely-crafted Christmas gnomes are made by Anders and Karin Ellerberg of Ölands Skogsby, Sweden. The Ellerbergs produce them in their *Ölandsdockan* shop, using the wool of sheep raised on Öland. The gnomes are dressed in gray with the traditional red hat, and wear wooden shoes. The tall figure is approximately 8 inches tall, including the hat, the smaller one about 4 inches. The ASI Museum Shop at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis is one of a select few stores in this country which sell these figures. The Museum Shop charges \$16.50 and \$11.50, plus shipping, respectively. Contact the ASI Museum Shop, 2600 Park Ave., Minneapolis, MN, 55407. Telephone 612-871-3004.

