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This is part of an occasional series by the Sanpete County Travel and Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance on the people and places along U.S. Highway 89.

Popular Scandinavian Festival Set For May 25-27

Ephraim's annual Scandinavian Heritage Festival and Conference, believed to be the largest Scandinavian heritage event in the Western United States, is set for May 25 to 27. The popular event attracts more than 10,000 people to Sanpete County, many of whom travel along U.S. Highway 89, the Heritage Highway.

The festival is an opportunity for people to learn about the influence of Scandinavians in Utah, and experience art and culture and authentic cuisine. Many local residents dress in Scandinavian costume. The festival runs Thursday evening until 9 p.m., Friday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m.

to 9 p.m. Highlights include a heritage conference, story telling, "Old World" craft booths and demonstrations, a Little Denmark supper, entertainment, sporting activities, a quilt show, historical tours, craft booths, a parade and more. Most events are held at Snow College, 150 E. College Ave. (100 North) or Pioneer Park (enter at about 50 N. 100 West).

"Old World Craft Booths," are educational exhibits of crafts dating back to Ephraim's Scandinavian ancestors. There will be demonstrations of Old World crafts, including blacksmithing, woodcarving, pottery making, rug weaving, bobbin lace making and more from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday in front of the Noyes Building at Snow College.

In addition, there will be more than 40 modern craft booths that will line College Avenue (100 North) between 100 and 300 East starting at noon on Friday until Saturday at 6 p.m.

On Friday, events include children's dance performance at 11 a.m., storytelling at 2 p.m. where costumed performers will tell Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales and give presentations on the author and artist; bread baking and karaoke contests at 2:30 p.m. and a 6 p.m. softball tournament, followed by the Little Scandinavian Supper at 6 p.m.

On Saturday, there is a 5K race at 8 a.m., a Lions Club breakfast at 8 a.m., musical performances, historical tours, puppet shows and more storytelling, and a parade that starts at 10 a.m. down Main Street. Entertainers that day include Nancy Hansen, Lincoln Highway, the Pfat Olde Professors, Pistol Rock and The Amazing Greys.



One special highlight of the festival is a Scandinavian history conference at Snow College, which runs Thursday night from 6 to 9 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. to noon. The conference seeks to inform participants about the culture and contributions of the Mormon pioneers, particularly those who immigrated from Scandinavia.

This year's conference will include a presentation by Kari Main, a doctoral candidate in American Studies at Yale University, on what relics and artifacts teach about the pioneers. Another presentation by Rick Matthews, president of the Icelandic Society of Utah, will address Scandinavian genealogical research. Additionally, a panel discussion is planned on the history of Ephraim's pioneer power system, which is celebrating its centennial this year. There is no charge and advance registration is not required. For more information, contact Kim Cragun at 435-283-4747. A complete schedule of events is available online at www.ScandinavianHeritageFestival.com

Some 650,000 Utahans trace their ancestry to Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Iceland. Sanpete County's culture has been greatly influenced by settlers who arrived first in the Salt Lake Valley from the Scandinavian countries and then were assigned to colonize central Utah. Many were farmers, carpenters, stone masons, cabinetmakers and furniture builders. The architecture of their farm buildings, cabins and houses were influenced by construction techniques and building forms from back home, a uniqueness that is still present today.

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