

# Swedish Cultural Association pays visit to Chatfield

By Patricia Barrett

Members of the Swedish Cultural Association of Manitoba paid a visit to Chatfield a few weeks ago to get together with locals, pay respects to Swedish ancestors from the area and enjoy the countryside.

Chatfield resident Dave Johnson said the association organized a field trip to the community on Sept. 16, and they brought the sunshine.

"Although the clouds filled the skies, the Swedes brought sunshine," said Johnson.

Members of association met with local people at the Chatfield Community Hall for lunch and storytelling, said Johnson. The group shared stories and histories of days past, honoured ancestors and danced.

"After lunch the group met at the Peace Lutheran Church, a one-room school and the Chatfield Creamery in town for more stories, history and even Happy Birthday in Swedish," said Johnson. "Fun was had by all and the sun did shine this day."

Swedish Cultural Association of Manitoba president Sonja Lundstrom said the association organized the field trip in partnership with Johnson and Armstrong resident Jack Cruise.

"We are so grateful to the people of Chatfield with their warm hospitality and sharing their hall and what they've done to preserve the rich heritage there with the church restored, school full of artifacts and the creamery," said Lundstrom. "We hit a gold mine when we came to Chatfield."

The itinerary included stops at Norris Lake and Clarence Tillerius Park. Tillerius was a wildlife artist who was born in Sandridge, about 27 kilometres



EXPRESS PHOTOS BY DAVE JOHNSON

On Friday, Sept. 16, the "Swedish Cultural Association Manitoba" visited Chatfield as part of their field trip.

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from Chatfield on Highway 17.

"We also went to the cemetery in Lillesve [south of Chatfield] and put a Swedish flag on every grave that was Swedish, which was almost all of them, and the site of the Morningstar school where many of us danced until the sun rose. We did a Skol [a toast when sharing a drink] there ... and had a little dance, just like the good old days," said Lundstrom.

Some of the cultural association's members grew up in the area or went to visit grandparents and friends, especially in the Lillesve area, said Lundstrom. The members came from Winnipeg, Stonewall, Beausejour, Lac du Bonnet, Alberta and as far away as Stockholm and Leksand, Sweden.

The association holds field trips to communities where there is a Swedish cultural presence. She said Elinor Barr's book *Swedes in Canada: invisible immigrants* talks about how the Swedes went throughout Canada assimilating. Wherever they went, they not only survived but also thrived in spite of the conditions.

"The Swedish Cultural Association on wheels goes to those places to connect with our culture and have fun. We don't know anyone, but after the food, coffee, stories — and then throw in the singing and dancing — we're all friends," said Lundstrom. "We've been to Eriksdale, Meadows, Sprague, Lac du Bonnet, Laclu, Ont., and next year plan to go to Erickson. We also have Lundar and Steep Rock on our radar."

After visiting Chatfield, Lundstrom said everyone went home "with a song in their heart and a dance in their step."