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-- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

Raise Your Glass and Skål!
Skål: Scandinavian Spirits
Opens January 28, 2017
On View Thru September 17, 2017



Philadelphia, PA- We are excited to announce the opening of our next special exhibition *Skål: Scandinavian Spirits*, which explores the drinking culture and traditions of Scandinavia. Some claim that the word *skål* has a root in the skulls of the vanquished, from which Viking warriors would drink to celebrate their victory. But this is a grisly tale, and most likely just a story. Most agree that *skål*, which is the word for bowl in Danish, Swedish

and Norwegian, harkens back to a time when wooden bowls, sometimes elaborately decorated, would be filled with beer and passed from person to person at community gatherings like weddings or festival days. From that tradition of passing the bowl, the term *Skål* is now also a toast – “Cheers!”

The history of imbibing on special (and not so special) occasions predates the proliferation of Christianity in Scandinavia. The Norse god Odin was credited with teaching humans how to brew beer, and drinking beer could take the form of worship and offering to the deities. The Norse sagas mention drinking beer, especially in celebration of battle victories, and sometimes in the form of drinking challenges. When harvests were small, however, beer brewing was restricted in order to reserve enough grain for food preparation.

Around the 1500s, the strong stuff made its way into society when *brännvin* (*brændevin* in Danish / *brennevin* in Norwegian), a term for vodka or distilled liquor, became known through Scandinavia. It was primarily distributed as medicine, but we can see that a wider use had become common by 1551 when King Christian III of Denmark-Norway attempted to ban serving *brännvin* on holidays to prevent people from attending church while drunk. By the 1600s, *brännvin* was widely available through home-based distilling, though the results often tasted awful, which led to adding herbs and other plants to improve the flavor. These selective infusions became what we now know as aquavit, which is regularly served with herring at any decent *smörgåsbord*.

Discover more about these and other fun, boozy histories when ASHM opens the exhibition ***Skål! Scandinavian Spirits***. This exciting travelling exhibition focuses on the heritage of beer and aquavit through stories, traditions, and recipes. Over 50 historic and contemporary artifacts related to Scandinavian drinking traditions will be on display from the Museum of Danish America (Elk Horn, IA), American Swedish Institute (Minneapolis, MN), Swedish American Museum (Chicago, IL), the Nordic Heritage Museum (Seattle, WA), and the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum (Decorah, IA). It may be the first collaborative project to involve such a broad spectrum of Scandinavian-American museums; it is as if we all gathered around the table—*Skål!*

Skål! Scandinavian Spirits opens on **January 28, 2017 and will be on view through September 17, 2017**. Join us **Saturday, February 25, 3-6pm** for an aquavit tasting at the Museum. Exhibit sponsor Arcus will be on hand to provide samples of aquavit while the Curator of the exhibit, Tova Brandt from Museum of Danish America in Iowa, will lead an exhibition tour. Aquavit samples, refreshments, and the tour are included with general admission, free for Museum members.

For more information on the exhibition and the Museum itself, please visit americanswedish.org or call (215) 389-1776. This special exhibition is included with general admission, \$10 for adults, \$7 for seniors and students, \$5 for children 5-11, free for children under 5 and for members. The American Swedish Historical Museum is located in scenic FDR Park at 1900 Pattison Avenue in South Philadelphia near the Sports Complex. Plenty of free parking is available. For those taking public transportation, the Broad Street Subway's AT&T/Pattison Avenue stop is within walking distance or SEPTA's Route 17 (Naval Base) can bring you right to the Museum.

Skål: Scandinavian Spirits is presented by Aalborg and Linie Aquavits. Organized by Tova Brandt of the Museum of Danish America, Elk Horn, Iowa.

It is presented at ASHM through the generosity of the Swedish Council of America, SWEA New Jersey, SWEA Philadelphia, the ASHM Auxiliary, Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, George C. and Esther Ann McFarland Foundation, Midsommarklubben, and an anonymous foundation. Support provided in part by the Philadelphia Cultural Fund. Funding for the American Swedish Historical Museum is supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

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