

The Decennial History of North Woods

IT IS WELL KNOWN that the first tournament in North Woods—then called the lost barony—took place on May 2nd, A.S. V. The prelude to that event is known only to a few. It is, however, a story worth telling, if only to give credit to those folk who made the later deeds of our barony possible.



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III

Long ago, in the City of the Singing Lance, or Lansing, there was a group of people who were devoted to ancient legends and prophetic dreams of heroism and wizardry. They were an energetic lot, and would often travel long distances to meet others of their kind. In September of A.S. III, three Lansingites, Thorvald, Signy, and their friend Susan, took a particularly ambitious trip to a gathering called Baycon, on the shores of the Great Western Bay. Now at Baycon that year there was tournament hosted by the Society for Creative Anachronism, which was yet a small organization restricted to the Bay area. Noting like it had ever been seen by any of the folk present. Many were inspired by the rebirth of chivalry in their own times, and returned to their homes to found new branches of the Society. Among those entrances were Thorvald, Signy, and Susan, and they traveled back to Lansing full of enthusiasm to plant the Society in their own land. When they got home, though, their fellows showed no great interest in Society culture. For a year and more, no concrete steps were taken to start a branch of the Society in Lansing. It was in this interval that the Middle Kingdom was founded in Treegirtsee.

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It was in autumn of A.S. IV, that the first serious plans to found a barony were made. Since the previous year there had been changes in the Lansing circle. There were many new fold: some were much taken with the romance of chivalry, others with the Viking spirit. When the Lansing fellowship gathered for their traditional Halloween festival, a large number came dressed in battle gear. It was then that Signy revived the idea of the Society, and this time the idea fell on responsive ears.

Among the earliest enthusiasts and planners were these: Thorvald inn Grimmi, Signy Dimmraedela, Susan, who were the only ones who had any experience of the Society; Caellyn y'Vearn (later Caellyn Fitz Hugh), Finnvarr de Taahe, Iriel of Brannokh, Morgan ap Ries (later Elen

Morningstar), Jaime de Retief (later Rurik), Karis of Alwher, and Sunka Witkotkata (later Alair of the Bloody Fountain). These folk, and others, began to prepare for a tournament the following spring. The most difficult problem they faced was the making of swords and armor. The swords used for tourney combat were even then made of rattan, which was difficult to acquire. Finnvarr made a journey to the East in December and acquired enough for but two swords. To preserve them, other swords made of pine were used for practice. Helms were a more difficult problem. No good helms could be bought or made for the tourney, so pails were adapted for temporary use. Practices consisted of Thorvald teaching from his memory of the Baycon tourney, where he had briefly donned armor, or from the Society journal *Tournaments Illuminated*, and everyone improvised from that basis.

Other preparations were also necessary. There was a great need for medieval garb, and several seamstresses—particularly Signy, Caellyn and Morwen—created appropriate costume. The riches clothing was made not by these ladies, but by Iriel, who in those days had foppish ambitions. Finally, Signy undertook to perform the work of both autocrat and seneschal. She secured a field for the tournament, a hall for the revel, and music for the dancing. She was the first dancing teacher in the barony. She also tried to communicate with the Society in the West. After an initial exchange of letters, the Westerners managed to misplace her address for many months and therefore lose the entire barony. Thus the barony was for much of the first year of its existence “the lost Barony.”

The day of the first tournament, May 2nd, A.S. V, dawned a cold, gray day, but nevertheless over thirty people assembled on the banks of the Red Cedar River for the occasion. Five fighters strove in the lists—Thorvald, Iriel, Finnvarr, Jaime de Retief, and Karis of Alwher. They were well matched. In a round-robin competition each of the five won two fights and lost two. There was a break, and the assembled barony danced around a Maypole prepared by Caellyn, in the process snaring a passing Roman in its coils. Then the five combatants re-entered the lists for an elimination tourney, where, after hard fighting, Thorvald defeated Karis in the final combat. As he stood there, triumphant and exhausted, holding a cracked sword, he was told that a mysterious champion had appeared to challenge him. Despite his fatigue, he fought, defeated and unmasked the unknown foe, who was revealed to be the lady Morgan ap Ries, who had trained secretly with some of the

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other new warriors to prepare for this adventure. There was general amazement at the deed, for it was not usual for women to fight in those days.

In the evening the folk of the barony gathered to celebrate in the medieval manner. The revels included two common and enjoyable Society pastimes, dancing and the relishing of old battles. There was also a court, which was presided over by Kendrick of Paisley as King Gorice XIII. In a right royal manner he congratulated the champion of the day and offered knighthood in his realm of Witchland to all five competitors. Four accepted, but Karis refused to take up the burden, thinking it inconsistent with his other obligations. Near midnight the revel broke up, and all went home, exhausted but happy.

The tourney, as it proved, was well timed. Two days later the infamous massacre at Kent took place, and some members of the barony were diverted to attend to that matter. Yet the idea of the Society did not die. Soon after the tourney Signy arranged a planning meeting, in which permanent officers were found for the barony. Iriel became the first knights marshal, Finnvarr the group's herald. Signy became mistress of arts and passed the seneschallate to Thorvald. This was the beginning of Thorvald's leadership of the barony. He took his office very seriously and performed his duties well. His first action was to start a newsletter for the Lost Barony, *Holmgang*, which held the group together over the summer of A.S. V, when the population was scattered. He also devoted much time to contacting the Society in the West and Tregirtsee, and to acquiring real helms for the next tournament, which was planned for Halloween. Some of the other members of the Lansing circle were aghast that the new fancy—which is how they thought of the Society—showed no signs of dying out. One of them, a certain Toman, invented a phrase to ridicule the medievalist nonsense and called it "Sca, the thing that would not die." The ridicule was ineffective, however, and "Sca" became a common short name for the Society in the barony and, later, throughout the Midrealm.

The barony began to grow quickly in September. Two of the more notable new members of this time were Thaid mak Tlesown and Merowald the Green (later Merowald de Sylveaston). Many others joined as well. The four experienced fighters—Karis had left—trained six novices, while everyone was taught various new dances. Enthusiasm increased—indeed became feverish—when it was learned that the King would attend. The people of the Lost Barony, which was now being called North Woods, expected the monarch to officially recognize the group, and

so began to think about choosing a baron. It was decided that the best North Woods fighter in the tournament would be recognized as baron, and a ring was ordered as a symbol of office; most people expected that Thorvald would win it.

On Halloween King Franz arrived, bringing with him Sir Philippe, runner-up in the recent Crown Tournament, and the bold Lady Astra. These folk met an astonishing sight: a new barony that was larger than Tregirtsee and not backward in either fighting or the peaceful pursuits. The tourney, which was also attended by Jehan de la Marche and the brothers of Seldom Rest, from the new Middle Marches, was a grand one. Sixteen fighters, including Sir Philippe, competed, while there were a hundred others who watched them and danced on the green. The royal company was not aware that the natives were equally surprised by all this.

The fighting was spirited, and to the surprise of all, the two finalists, Thorvald and Iriel, were both from North Woods. Thorvald prevailed over his friend, and was proclaimed baron. The barony was amazed and gratified when Thorvald was knighted on the field, becoming the fourth knight of the realm and the first of a long line from North Woods.

Nor were the revels less successful. The people of the barony welcomed the king with a processional pavane, then introduced their visitors to the wild suicide bransle, devised and played by sly Steerpike, or as some say, by his cousin Thaid.

The evening closed with a near-tragedy. A Polish kinglet in the area, who was jealous of Society ways, sent his bully-boys to abduct King Franz. Fortunately His Majesty's local guide was quick-witted enough to see that the knaves were drunk and diverted them with a clever lie while the king escaped. Thus the honor of North Woods was upheld.

As a result of this tournament the barony of North Woods and its leaders became very important in the kingdom. Thorvald was now the realm's premier baron and a knight, and soon after became Chronicler of the Middle Kingdom, the first. Signy, who was then his lady and baroness, was recognized as a learned, capable woman. But the leaders of Tregirtsee looked on the barony and its leaders with some misgiving. They feared this new people might be as unstable and ambitious as they were vigorous.

The barony was certainly active in this time. North Woods folk traveled to the first tournament in the Middle Marches in November, where Thaid beat everyone but Andrew of Seldom Rest; to the Cleftlands

in April, where the Midrealm first fought Easterners; and to Treegirtsee for Kingdom Twelfth Night. There was also a baronial Twelfth Night celebration for stay-at-homes. This was the barony's first feast, and it was made possible by Caellyn's cooking skills and the patronage of Thomas the Ox. This generous and intelligent man was of a rather trollish aspect, and was often called Tom Troll. He was not above using his appearance to fool strangers. One incident concerning him is famous. Several Society folk had gone to a nearby inn dressed in their medieval garb and were met by astonishment. When the nervous serving wench asked Tom what he wanted to eat, he looked trollish and exclaimed, "Meat!" The wench, taken aback, then asked him how he wanted his beef-steak done. Troll took a coin from his purse, flipped it, studied it, and then replied, "Cooked!"

North Woods was in its early days very warlike. The inhabitants were so impatient for battle that in February they found a dusty arena wherein they could hold a mid-winter tourney. It was on that occasion that Prince Cariadoc first revealed his double-elimination lists, thereafter used in Crown Tournaments. Andrew of Seldom Rest won the tourney, beating Finnvarr, but martial glory accrued to North Woods also, as the barony's fighters defeated the rest of the realm in melee without losing a man. The North Woods Mummings also made their first appearance: during the day Eleanor Fairbairn and Inurien performed the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe, while at the revel mimed ballads were performed.

In the winter North Woods acquired more new members including Gwendolyn Ro Kearsey, Bearengaer hinn Raudi and Morna of Cenydd. The last soon became a close friend of Morgan ap Ries, and together they began the Guild of Exotic (that is, Eastern) Dancers. Morgan also had a less-known project, for see was in secret communication with the folk in Ann Arbor who were soon to form the Dark Horde.

The second coronation of Cariadoc and the Spring Crown Tournament of May, A.S. VI took place in North Woods, on a rare sunny day. There was an archery tournament, the first North Woods shield wall—first in the realm—and fierce competition for the crown. It was not won by the mighty Sir Andrew, to the surprise of most. He was defeated by Randall Longsleeves, trained by Thorvald in secret, and by Iriel. These two men of North Wood fought in the finals, and Iriel was triumphant, winning the crown for himself and his new lady Morna.

It was on this occasion that three surly Mongols first appeared to

threaten the Kingdom with the might of the Dark Horde.

There were a hundred Society folk at the feast that night. There were satirical jabs at the short king by Steerpike and the Mummings, and the first performance of the Exotic dancers, Morgan and Morna. There was nearly a melee on the dance floor when Iriel and Sir Philippe disagreed on the proper way to treat a dancer who was also a princess, until it was established that only the king could join in the dancing. Finally Iriel was knighted and was inaugurated as tanist with Morna as princess, to the rejoicing of North Woods.

Little happened that summer of A.S. VI. But secretly things were developing. There were stirrings of activity in the Three Hills. Thorvald and Signy visited the West Kingdom, and spoke at length with the officers of the Society. The Dark Horde grew in Ann Arbor, appearing once in the Cleftlands as a new fighting force. And Iriel lost his lady princess's affections. This was a personal blow to Iriel, yet he insisted on crowning her in October anyway.

Coronation and Crown took place on the same day, as was the custom, in the March of the Marshes. The Dark Horde attended again, and challenged the Midrealm to melee. Their spear-phalanx won a single battle, then began to lose as the opposition caught on. In one battle, Thorvald fought with the outnumbered Horde, and soon found himself alone against an entire team of North Woods fighters. They honorably fought him in single combat, and he amazed the populace by killing all but the last of his opponents. The Crown Tourney that day was won by Andrew, who defeated his squire Barinn for the honor.

Iriel's first court included the ducal investiture of Cariadoc and his lady Diana, and some important presentations. Thomas the Ox presented Iriel with a heavy personal crown, as well as some Middle Kingdom coins bearing the new king's face. These last were designed by Merowald and cast by Tom with the help of others in the barony. Yang, the spokesman of the Dark Horde, also made a presentation, a declaration of intent. He said that the Horde, though a part of the Society, would never swear allegiance to crown or baron, and instead would be in eternal, if friendly, rivalry with all non-nomadic peoples. Iriel received this idea graciously, for it had promise, but he soon had reason to rue that day as the rivalry became real.

It was at this event, in King Cariadoc's last court, that Signy received recognition for her talents and was admitted to the Order of the Laurel.

Later in October, the Canton of the Three Hills hosted its first

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tourney. It was won by Finnvarr, who was also knighted, and it was otherwise remarkable for having a free feast. It was an enjoyable event, but there was trouble brewing. It had been decided by the BoD that small new groups, like Three Hills, should be attached to larger nearby baronies, like North Woods. Thorvald enforced his baronial rights in this case, causing hostility both in the Three Hills and in Treetgirtsee. Nor was this the only controversy of the reign. Treetgirtsee distrusted Thorvald and Signy as too willful and ambitious. They in turn thought the province disorganized and obstructive, and distrusted Yang, whom they thought flaunted all Society custom. Yang grew closer to Treetgirtsee and played the mocking minstrel at every opportunity. Iriel, a straight-forward man who disliked politics, was caught in the middle, particularly when Morna began flirting with the Horde.

There were both very good and very bad times in the reign. On the positive side, North Woods held the first melee tournament in November, and the first Feast of Fools in February, the last being the idea of Caelynn. The Exotic Dancers gained popular approval, and even the morose Iriel invented the phrase "Hoo-bah" in sardonic approbation. One of the joys of Iriel's reign was the declaration of war on the East at Kingdom Twelfth Night in Treetgirtsee.

The negative aspect, was, however, more obvious. At the King's Birthday Tourney the Horde attacked two North Woods melee teams by surprise. It was done in a spirit of fun, but tension was so high that misinterpretation was inevitable and hostility resulted. The standard of conduct in the lists declined as inter-group rivalry and distrust increased, and even the knights were severely criticized. At the first event in the Flame, Yang sang the "Dancer's Vanity," a song that insulted the king personally.

Yet North Woods continued to grow nonetheless. In this reign Gareth the Russell, Foscadh, Elienor of the Nameless Beast, and Neill of Marlincourt joined. Fighting prowess grew to new heights. North Woods survived and continued to grow in creativity.

This was shown particularly at Three Hills in April, where there was a meeting of scholars who studied things medieval. Thorvald and Signy planned an event to coincide with this conference, and the first Medcon was born. Both fighting and peaceful pursuits were displayed; among the latter was a performance of the plays of Robin Hood. It was a grand occasion, which climaxed with the knighting of Merowald and Bearengaer.

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Iriel passed on the throne to Andrew at Treetgirtsee in May of A.S. VII; after this he was seen only occasionally, while Morna completely disappeared and her friend Morgan joined the Horde. Thaid defeated Bearengaer for the crown, but the Crown Tournament was not fought to a high standard, and few were happy, especially the victor. The evening court saw the creation of the New Gothic Army, which was a sworn brotherhood of primarily North Woods fighters who opposed the Mongol Menace. Hrothperaht, a friend of Merowald's announced its creation by outrageously imitating the outrageous Yang. Also, Finnvarr took his leave of the kingdom, following Cariadoc and Jehan to seek his fortune in the East.

Andrew's first reign was another quiet one for North Woods. There were some important events. The Dark Horde held its first event in Ann Arbor, which they called the Crossroads, and at that event King Andrew gave them the land where they were camped. At news of this many in North Woods demanded that Thorvald lead a revolt against the King. But Thorvald and his advisor Neill of Marlincourt feared more dissension, and arranged a secret compromise with the king. When the confrontation took place, Thorvald was reassured of his baronial rights, and then helped Andrew quell his angry barony. The maneuver caused some ill-feeling towards the baron, but saved the weakened kingdom more strife. In this period, Thorvald was no longer acting as his own seneschal, but remained as Chronicler.

This was the summer of the first event of the Canton of the Roaring Wastes in Detroit, and also the summer when Duncan MacGregor founded the Clan of the Disputed Tartan in that area. Among its members were Rolac the Wise and his lady Lindanlorein. Dagan, Rolac's friend, appeared at this time, but he became a member of the Horde, as he lived near Yang's home, the Snake Pit.

The first Pennsic War took place. It was a notable victory, and Prince Thaid was knighted at that time.

Thaid's coronation and the Crown Tournament took place in North Woods in October of A.S. VII. The tournament itself was considered a disgrace, especially the final fights between Andrew, the victor, and Bearengaer. The feast and revels were a different story. The feast, attended by two hundred, was so sumptuous as to become legendary. The entertainment was equally good: the Exotic Dancers, particularly Gwendolyn, Merowald and Elienor, portrayed the story of Thaid's youth

with the Picts. At court the host of the event, Sunka and Caellyn, who was the chief cook, were given the Order of the Purple Fret, which they were the first to receive. Furthermore Caellyn, who was then the Poet Laureate of the Kingdom, was elevated to the Order of the Laurel.

Thaid had been known in the past as a wild youth, nearly as wild as his cousin Steerpike. But since his crown victory, he had been serious and conscientious. Yet he did not have an easy reign. He and his queen, Alexis Megaera from the Flame, fell out early, and, as in Iriel and Morna's time, the dignity of the crown suffered. The fighters and especially the chivalry were in low repute. Factionalism was rife, and the Horde continued to grow because of it. Indeed, at the Flame's Christmas Tourney, Yang proclaimed himself Kha-Khan that he might better rule its far-flung branches. After this, Tar-khanates were established all over. A strong one appeared in Three Hills, where the rule of Thorvald was still resented.

Thaid became very discouraged by all this, and in January decided to assume the monastic habit, and convinced his friends in North Woods to do likewise. The ladies of the kingdom were aghast at this, and on a famous occasion, the "Hermit's Revel," came as temptresses to dissuade the menfolk from their retirement from the world. Their seductive wiles were victorious over Thaid's new-found resolutions and the kingdom got back its king.

North Woods itself weathered the times better than its monarch. The barony did lose Signy, its first teacher in the arts, when she moved to the East in the fall. But Ellen the Fair stepped into the vacated place. She inspired the creation of the Madrigal group, and the Recorder Consort, and particularly encouraged dance. It was at this time that the Mannschaft and the Entree Courante were choreographed. There appeared at this time Aldric of North Mark and Gillian d'Uriel. Also, for part of Thaid's reign, Lauryan Helhath, a lady of North Woods, was Queen of the East, reigning with Jehan de la Marche.

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In May of A.S. VIII, the second Medcon was celebrated in the Three Hills, which was growing apace. The North Woods Mummers did an ambitious project, a Unicorn Masque written by Caellyn. Even more spectacular were the bridge fights between

Thorvald's men and Bahadur's New Model Army, a Three Hills-Horde alliance. The NMA tried to advance tactics by combining the shield wall with pole weapons. It was a worthy idea, but a dismal failure in the face of the determination and experience of North Woods.

Soon after, Thaid stepped down at the Crown Tournament in the Flame. He looked old, and after giving a final speech, he staggered off and collapsed. A rumor went around that he was dead. It was not true, but the kingdom saw little of Thaid and more of Steerpike for a while thereafter. The tournament was won by Merowald, who fought for the worthy Gwendolyn. North Woods also rejoiced that the other finalist was Merowald's squire Gareth, who was knighted that day. Finally Elen the Fair, Gareth's lady, was elevated to the Order of the Laurel.

Andrew's second reign was notable for the fact that Caellyn became Queen of the East after Finnvarr won the crown there. Prince Merowald went a traveling, and spent the summer far to the south-west, in the barony of Sirenia, now Meridies, then Atenveldt. There he amused himself by passing himself off as a simple artist. Also Three Hills hosted two events: One of them was flooded out, and at the other Yang was given the Laurel by Andrew, who had neglected to consult the other Laurels, who lived in North Woods. This became a controversy that took long to calm.

At the Second Pennsic War, the Midrealm faced an East ruled by Finnvarr and Caellyn. More hard-fought than the battles was the issue of whether women should fight, which was settled with a bizarre compromise. Bearengaer did great deeds in battle; that summer he also showed a different talent by helping the people of Flint to form the Canton of Withermoor.

Merowald's coronation and the Crown Tournament of October A.S. VIII were held in the Roaring Wastes and were hosted by the Disputed Tartan. Because Andrew and Ann were to be elevated to ducal estate, Duke Akbar and King Angus of the East were present, and they also fought each other in the first round of the crown lists before dropping out. Bearengaer was the victor, defeating Gareth in the final round. The court that night was a very long one, and is remembered for the armorial cloaks that Caellyn gave her friends, the king and queen, and for Rodney the Rusty's moving pictures of the first two wars.

Merowald's reign was yet plagued with the division of the preceding two years. Further, the crown was very busy with constructing a law code for the realm and arranging the next Pennsic War. It was in this period that the Curia Regis, which was almost entirely drawn from the barony, became a strong institution. Its capable members were Richard d'Alsace, Seneschal, and Mary of Kif, Mistress of Arts, both from Three Hills, Rolac the Wise, Herald, and Caellyn, who was Chronicler now that Thorvald

had resigned to become Assistant Steward of the Society.

The most famous trouble between the Horde and the Kingdom happened in December at the Flame, when the queen publicly asked a Horde minstrel to sing something besides propaganda. But in this reign Merowald began to heal this division by asking for a Horde alliance for the next Pennsic War, which request was accepted.

It was a very good year for the baronial seat. Among the new folk of the time were such famous people as Fern de la Foret, Catherine le Moyne (Aimée), Brusten de Bearsul, Elestron, Kennaqrae, Kay of Triastrium, Matilda of Taye and Guy de la Mayne Esanglant. Neill was made a court baron for his service as Dragon Surrogate, the mimed ballad was revived, and Foscahd discovered women.

North Woods hosted the Kingdom Twelfth Night feast, at which there was much song, a mimed ballad that included the royalty, as well as the last appearance of Count Iriel. On this occasion Sunka was invested with the Laurel for his knowledge of games; he soon afterwards resigned the honor. The Disputed Tartan gave the king a royal crown made by Bethaldryk Quarrel. Soon afterwards Yamato Daishi gave both king and queens crowns made by Moira of the Eastrealm, and disparaged the clan's gift, which caused some trouble for him.

At Three Hills in February Merowald gave Rolac the first Dragon's Tooth for dramatic prowess in arms. It was falsely rumored later that the royalty was stoned here; in truth not a rock was seen. In March at North Woods Rolac the Wise and Dagan du Darregonne were knighted, and Dagan left the Horde to accept the honor. He later joined the Disputed Tartan.

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For most of the reign Prince Bearengaer had no lady, which was accounted a disgrace, but when he chose one, it was the wise lady Jessica of the Willows (Alessandra), who was of the Three Hills, and who invented the Order of the Willow. Their coronation was at Medcon, and took place in the rain. The crown tournament of May A.S. IX was for the first time not on coronation day, but two weeks later in Würm Wald; Dagan won the throne there.

Bearengaer, who was living in Battle Creek, or Vigarfyldie, was a good king, which was better than most expected; he was both diplomatic and conscientious. He and Thorvald worked together on two innovations. The first was the system of authorizing new fighters to ensure their safe and chivalrous conduct in the lists. The second was tactical planning for the

war: This was the first year war maneuvers were held in Withermoor.

This reign the Disputed Tartan revolted against the baron and the king. This Great Scots Revolt was won by Thorvald's forces, despite some defeats in the field. Thorvald made the defeated Scots drink Viking sea scum and wear "Viking Mouse" ears on their helms. Nevertheless it was a friendly occasion, one that was long remembered. After this, Duncan MacGregor was seldom seen, and Rolac became thane of the clan. Rolac was very influential at this time. He had three squires, Bethaldryk, Gareth, and Coley, who were a model for the rest of the kingdom, and after this time, squiredom became more popular and respected. Prince Dagan also acquired a squire, a samurai named Shimitsu.

The Midrealm won the Pennsic War that year through Horde alliance and Viking strategy. After Bearengaer's forces had won a limited victory, he withdrew his army, leaving the East to face an empty fortress. Prince Dagan, however, stayed behind, and fell gloriously in single combat against Prince Cariadoc of the East. Yang did not attend the war, and his influence waned.

A recovered Dagan assumed the throne in October of A.S. IX. His queen was Armida, a quiet lady. At the crown tournament, they were presented by Withermoor with a remarkable gift, a fool on a leash. That tourney was won by Dagan's friend Rolac, whose lady princess was the talented Lindanlorien. She was at that time the Deputy Mistress of Arts, and with the great support of her superior, Mary of Kif, published the *Mistress of Arts Handbook* and later, the *Autocrat's Handbook*.

Another publication project was undertaken in the baronial seat. Thorvald was now Steward of the Society, and he caused the Corpora, or Society laws, to be printed. At that time Thorvald had a lady, Danion of Cliffwater, who was a great help to him. It is perhaps because of her that he was now known as Thorvald the Kind. The following poem appeared anonymously in the Pale:

Sing praise to our baron, Sir Thorvald the Kind
Warrior, dramatist, patron of the arts
Courtly and chivalrous, always refined
His humor and grace are well-known in far parts.
Sing praise to our baron, Sir Thorvald the Kind
He always finishes that which he starts.
Sing praise to our baron, Sir Thorvald the Kind,
Warrior, dramatist, patron of the arts.

Another anonymous story that was composed then at North Woods was the Tragical History by Five Distressed Ladies and a Knave, while in the Roaring Wastes, the Mad Monk wrote his history of the First Pennsic War.

North Woods hosted a tourney in February where all good folk were asked to appear in the gear of the Thirteenth Century. In this the day was a great success. Finnvarr was accused of treason and tried by arms by Merowald. Finnvarr was defeated, but punished no further.

Soon after this, Eoforwic, a group founded by Finnvarr and Gillian, held its first tourney. Many from North Woods attended, and Eoforwic has always since had strong ties to North Woods.

Medcon this year was an exceptional event. Caellyn and others staged Gammer Gurton's Needle, which was a great success. The baron performed one evening an inspiring ritual wherein he invoked the various powers to protect the barony and its people. Brusten, upon returning from Medcon, saw in the road a ghostly knight. This was perhaps an omen.

Rolac and Lindanlorein were crowned at North Woods in May of A.S. X, during the course of a great flood. It was impressive nevertheless. The crown tourney that followed saw the curse of the kite shields, and the kingdom got for its prince Michael, who was a mere warrior without armorial bearings.

There was much warfare in this reign. At Three Hills, the king asked Thorvald for his baronial muster for the Pennsic War. Thorvald demanded money, which Rolac, a thrifty Scot, refused to provide. Thorvald then gave the king such a rag-tag force as to enrage him, so Thorvald declared himself in revolt. Rolac tried to confuse the issue by bringing in an impostor who looked like Thorvald, but none in North Woods was fooled. Thorvald, however, was defeated later that summer and supported the king at the war. The first meeting with Meridies took place at this time, though this was not actually a war but a great carnival. It again rained.

Rolac made great preparations for the Pennsic War, for he knew Westerners were coming to support the East. Thus there were great war maneuvers in Withermoor, and scouts trained. In the event this training ensured Midrealm victory. But the war was a heavy burden for the king, because he had to make great efforts to secure the site; then there was flooding during the war itself. One bright spot was the Pentathlon of the Arts, a marvelous display of skill in which Caellyn was greatly honored. It was for this competition that she devised the round map of the Known

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World later popularized by Merowald. At this time, Caellyn was replaced as Chronicler by Catherine le Moyne.

Rolac's reign is well-known for his conflict with Michael. Michael was uncouth, arrogant, and much taken with his new high rank. Rolac, who had high standards for royalty, grew impatient and then angry with his prince. By the time of Michael's coronation in October, A.S. X they were not speaking. Rolac on this occasion knighted his squire Coley and then he and his queen openly rebuked Michael. Rolac then made himself scarce, announcing himself to be a knight-errant.

The next crown tournament again had a superfluity of kite shields, but a better result, as Albert won it. Nevertheless the reign of Michael soon began to look grim, especially for North Woods. Guy and Gwendolyn, who were the kingdom's Herald and Exchequer, were deprived of their offices; though there was more than politics involved, it was handled very poorly. Also at this time Ellen the Fair left for Tregirtsee, and the Canton of the Three Hills finally acquired enough members to become the Barony of Andelcrag. This last was actually beneficial for both North Woods and Andelcrag, but it was a blow at the time.

In this reign, Annora ni Aethelbrand moved from Three Hills to North Woods, and soon after joined House Sylveaston. Another lady of that household, Fern de la Foret, became the first woman authorized to fight in the Midrealm.

The St. Valentine's Day Massacre was this year spoiled by a confrontation between Rolac and Michael. Michael heard that Rolac, who had not sworn fealty, would attend, and threatened to have him tried if he did so. The event became the occasion for a great argument between those knights who believed Rolac to be in the right and those who supported the king. Fortunately, no permanent feud resulted. Soon after, in March of A.S. X, Michael, who had driven away his queen and outraged the entire kingdom, abdicated.

Albert succeeded immediately, but refused to be crowned until May. In his uncrowned state he presided as host monarch of the Society's Decennial celebration, which took place in Three Hills. At this even Earl Merowald de Sylveaston won the Championship of the Known World and crowned his lady Johanna von Boven Queen of Love and Beauty.

A.S.

XI

The Crown Tournament of May A.S. XI was held

in North Woods. Dagan, who had been runner-up in October, won, beating Finnvarr and all of his other opponents without once using a shield. At court King Albert honored the barony by giving it a canton of the kingdom's arms on its own, in recognition of its great services to the realm and as a replacement for the canton—Three Hills—that the barony had recently lost. Albert also created the first two Masters-at-Arms in the Midrealm, the first being Komura Shimitsu, Dagan's squire. The crown tournament festivities ended the next day with a performance of *Once on a Time* by the North Woods Mummers.

It was a calm reign for North Woods, save for the Scots Revolt, which was won by the Scots. Great feats of arms were done there, and Bearengaer and Rolac fought on a bridge. Guy and Gwendolyn were married. Many folk of the North Woods were honored with peerages. Sir Thorvald became the first Midrealm member of the Order of the Pelican, for his services to the entire Society. Caellyn was honored with the Pelican at the war, and there Aldric was knighted.

At that war, which was the fifth, the Midrealm faced both Eastern and Meridian forces. The Disputed Tartan and allies did such devastation on the enemy that they were the envy of the rest of Albert's army. Sir Aldric, newly knighted and hot for honor, was with the victorious banner-guard, and thus nearly deprived of battle. When a single Eastern straggler showed up, the banner-guard deferred to Aldric. The new knight's first rush knocked over both the Easterner and a sapling behind him. Aldric paused and chivalrously righted both the warrior and the sapling before finishing his opponent.

Dagan began his second reign in October of A.S. XI. His queen this time was the beautiful and talented Catherine of Merionydd, formerly native to Treegirtsee. The crown tournament was held in Withermoor, and was the last major event held in that canton. Here Merowald did such deeds as to be awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to add to his own Dragon's Tooth. In the finals he was beaten by that other scion of North Woods, Finnvarr, who again fought for Caellyn. Thus royalty returned to the baronial seat for the first time since Merowald and Gwendolyn's reign.

At this time North Woods was fortunate to acquire several new members of note, including Fern's sister Kirsten, Elanion (later Roxanne of Blackmede), Kirith, Christiana della Septentria Silvia as well as Randall d'Artinual, who had been present at some earlier events. Signy returned to live in Vigarfylkie, now and independent shire. Also Vidrir Giluinrod (later Christopher of North Woods) led the North Woods Madrigalers to

such heights that Dagan made them his royal singers.

In this reign North Woods and Andelcrag attempted to form a Principality together, but the project foundered on old hostilities. The king, in the meantime, worked to secure a permanent Pennsic War site, and found a suitable one at Cooper's Lake. Lindanlorien revived *Holmgang*, and Hrothperaht, (Robert of St. Ammon) published a chronicle of Midrealm history to Albert's time.

Two noteworthy events took place at North Woods. The first was the Practical Arts Contest in February, sponsored by Thorvald and Danion. This was won by Princess Caellyn with a design for a folding throne. Caellyn herself hosted in April a Masqued Ball, where all dressed as animals. There was also a feast divided at the salt: Those with discerning tastes sat above, those who liked simpler foods below. Several pranks were played on King Dagan. He was given a live-frog pie by the hosts, and later pelted with marshmallows that bore the kingdom arms.

A.S.
XII

The coronation of Finnvarr and Caellyn took place in Eoforwic in May of A.S. XII. The North Woods presence was understandably great. At the event Sir Merowald was admitted to the Order of the Laurel, and Elestron was knighted. The king also had something less pleasant for the three members of North Woods who had long claimed to be his children, namely Brusten, Fern, and Catherine le Moyne. Catherine, sensing trouble, was not present. Brusten was condemned to the Iron Mask for looking too much like the king, while Fern was to be married to the East. Both made their escape—Thaid helped Fern by throwing her a ladder from a handy balcony—and Finnvarr later relented. The evening finished when the barony honored the new king with a masque.

North Woods similarly dominated the crown tournament in Nordskogen. The finalists were Merowald and his former squire Mrehton the Rotund, with Merowald victorious. His princess was Kirsten von der Wald. Soon after the tournament he went traveling again, this time spreading good will in Atenveldt and the West.

Caellyn was a very active queen. She did much traveling, especially to new groups, and she also reorganized the distribution of armorial scrolls. Finnvarr concentrated on war, for it was his duty to fight both Meridies and the East. The southerners invaded the Flame in June with a small force. Finnvarr's army so outnumbered the enemy that Foscadh, who had moved to Meridies and founded the Shire of the Black Hole,

convinced North Woods to fight with him to make the battle a more chivalrous proposition. The Midrealm, led by Finnvarr and inspired by the words of the wounded Master Moonwulf, won anyway. Here took place the greatsword battle between Shimitsu and Foscahd, where the samurai gave a display of almost superhuman prowess.

The Sixth Pennsic War was a well-attended event. Three of the four kings of the Known World were present. For the first time the Midrealm followed the magnificent banner made by Countess Catherine. The Midrealm, facing an Eastern force reinforced by Western dukes and savage Tuchux, lost the field battle, but the archery and the battle of the kings saved a tie. At this event Finnvarr recognized Fern as his legitimate daughter, as she left for a two-year stay in Atenveldt.

Catherine le Moyne turned over the chroniclership to Brusten, married Garahan McLeitrim, and went to Rivenstar.

In September the barony honored the monarchs with a birthday tourney on their mutual birthday, which was a miraculous sunny day. Finnvarr fought one fight for each year of his life, and he and Caellyn were kissed by an appropriate number of lords and ladies.

Merowald and Kirsten were crowned at Cleftlands in October of A.S. XII. Immediately before this, Annora de Sylveaston was given the Laurel by the outgoing monarchs, and Caellyn gave the kingdom two folding thrones of great beauty. (Soon afterwards, she gave the East Kingdom a similar pair.) The chief event of the day was *Harold Godwinsson*, a pageant of the tale of the Norman Conquest, long a dream of the Saxon Earl Merowald and the Norman Duke Dagan. It was written by Gillian and performed mainly by the folk of North Woods and Eoforwic. In the evening court, Finnvarr and Caellyn were raised to ducal status.

This reign was very eventful. Merowald traveled extensively, notably to an Eastern crown tournament and later, to the Shire of the Forgotten Sea in the new region of Calontir. He was very impressed by that far outpost of the realm, and he himself inspired loyalty to the Midrealm, most particularly by taking a squire, Temon. At North Woods Twelfth Night the king was presented with a long-overdue knighthood scroll by Finnvarr.

A.S.
XIII

In May of A.S. XIII, a squires' revolt broke out in North Woods, led by Sylveaston squires. The king refused to take sides and disappeared for the occasion. The queen, however, and the knights of the realm remained to oppose the rebels. The squires were put

down with the loss of only one knight, Elestron, who was mourned in court (but later reappeared); Brusten was hung, but cut down by rebel supporters. Queen Kirsten also recognized Gillian d'Uriel as a member of the Order of the Laurel and as Baroness of Septentria, and created Kendrick of Paisley a court baron for his long service to North Woods. He thought it ironic to receive such recognition on the thirteenth day of the thirteenth year. There was great dancing that night.

Kennaqrae had returned briefly from the East on that occasion, and showed great prowess, and the knights of the kingdom clamored for his knighthood. Merowald had the pleasure of knighting his own squire at his last court. At the same time Kay of Triastrium joined the Order of the Laurel. In the evening court Merowald was invested as Duke. Soon after this Kennaqrae was "re-knighted" by the Eastern King.

The reign of Moonwulf and Zarina, who then succeeded, was quiet in North Woods. Well worth remembering, however, is the fact that the unexpected victor of the hellishly hot Three Rivers crown tournament, Nathan von Daritz, had an unexpected lady, none other than Countess Kirsten. She was dismayed at first, saying that Nathan had promised not to win, but she did her duty well. At Pennsic VII, another Sylveaston squire, Brusten, was knighted on the field, and Finnvarr entered the Order of the Pelican.

Nathan and Kirsten were crowned in Würm Wald in October of A.S. XIII. They had to cope with a rapidly-growing realm, but they proved themselves quite capable of doing so. The crown tournament again took place at North Woods, and it was attended by a great crush of people. The fighting was both remarkably good and remarkably bad. Two great and chivalrous fights took place between Alen and Sir Polidor. That day four new knights were made, after heated discussion among the chivalry: the finalists, Alen and Laurelen, were knighted before their last fights, while Hugo and Corin were knighted at court. The feast that evening, cooked by Caellyn, was immense. Over four hundred sat at table, yet all were served.

In January North Woods again hosted a royal Twelfth Night. Outside there was a great snowstorm, while inside was revolt. Garia of York and Ursula, both old North Woods folk, seized the royalty and conducted a court of fools with the help of Sylveaston. A more serious revolt took place in May, when the squires under new leadership and with the help of Foscahd again attacked their masters. This time the revolt was disguised as a Squires' Day of Peaceful Arts. The knights were not fooled,

and thrashed them again.

A.S.

XIV

At Laurelen's coronation in A.S. XIV, Countess Catherine became Kingdom Mistress of Arts and a member of the Order of the Laurel. Kirsten was invested as a duchess. Otherwise the reign was remarkable as a time of recovery in North Woods, as the barony recuperated from a long period as royal capital. At this time the chroniclership left North Woods. Thaid and Fern were married. There was a Viking raid, led by Thorvald, on Andelcrag. At the Eighth Pennsic War, Lindanlorien entered the Order of the Laurel. Finally, at Midrealm Decennial, Duke Merowald, fighting for Kirsten, won the championship of the Queens of the Midrealm.

Soon after this, Alen came to the throne. This most recent reign is too close to us for a simple evaluation. It is perhaps most commonly remembered as the time when both Merowald and Kirsten left the barony. Yet despite this loss, the North Woods began to grow again. In this period, many children were born or were growing up in the barony, and many older folk joined as well. In February, yet another knight form the baronial seat was created, when Randall d'Artinual was dubbed in Three Hills. It is but one of many signs as we enter the reign of Talymar and Valmai and the fifteenth year of the Society, that the glory of North Woods is not all in the past.

A.S.

XV

A Note to the Reader —A.S. XXX

The first edition of the *Decennial History of North Woods* was written and produced to celebrate the barony's tenth anniversary in A.S. XV. The canton of Eoforwic, which owes its origins to two transplanted North Woods folk, pooled its talents to produce an illuminated, bound, and boxed copy for presentation to Baron Thorvald. A few other copies, less fancy, were sold at the Decennial. The *Decennial History* fell out of sight soon thereafter.

When I recently rediscovered the original manuscript of in my files, I saw why this was the case. An attached note, meant for the friend who copied the first edition for me, says "12 copies." Only Baron Thorvald and eleven others ever owned a copy!

It may be that, fifteen years later, the *Decennial History* no longer has an audience. People in our Society often prefer to read history about people they have heard of, and the vast majority of those named in this work have long been inactive, gone from North Woods, or both. However, I have reissued it for the benefit of whoever may wish to learn about the early days of the first and one of the most famous baronies of the Midrealm.

The text you have here is not quite identical to the original. I have corrected one outright error, put in a couple of clarifications, and changed one exceedingly awkward phrase. Otherwise I have not tried to second-guess my historical and editorial judgment as of A.S. XV.

As far as I know, there is no account of the history of North Woods since A.S. XV, which is a shame. I'm not the person to write it. Events and responsibilities have conspired to make my visits to North Woods extremely rare. If this work inspires someone to set down the very considerable achievements of the North Woods barony in more recent years, I will be very happy indeed.

Chronological note: The first North Woods tourney in A.S. V took place on May 2, 1970. Other dates can be identified by reference to this point, if the reader remembers that the first day of the Society year is May 1, not January 1.

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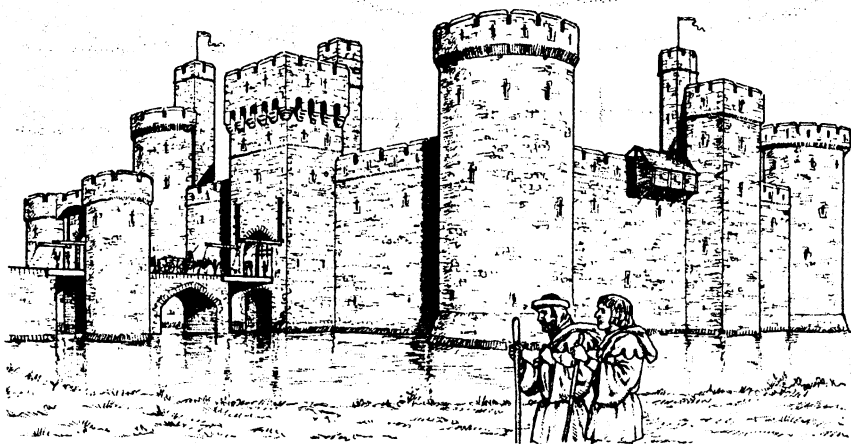
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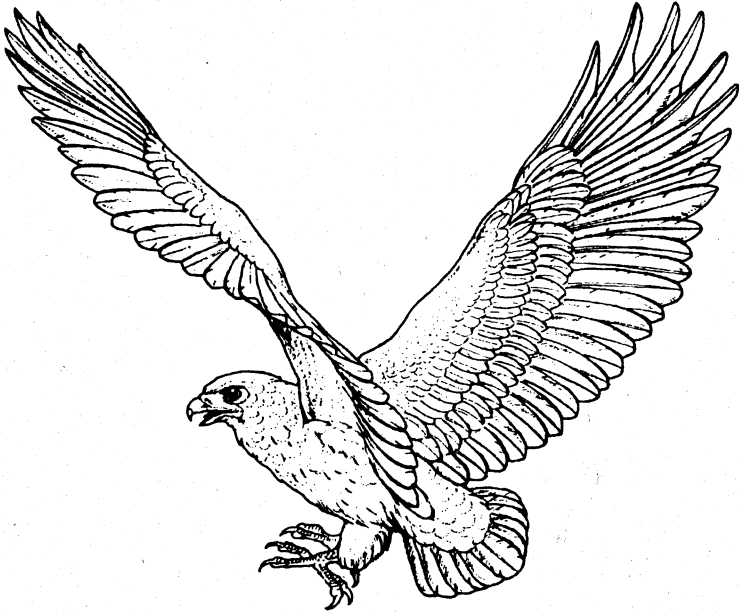
THE DECENNIAL HISTORY OF NORTH WOODS



BY
FINNVARR DE TAAHE

FOLUMP ENTERPRISES
Urbana, Illinois

THE DECENNIAL HISTORY OF NORTH WOODS



BY
FINNVARR DE TAAHE

A reprint of the edition of A.S. XV

FOLUMP ENTERPRISES
Urbana, Illinois

To Sir Thorvald inn Grimmi,
Knight of the Society,
Midrealm Principal of the Order of the Pelican,
Baron of North Woods

The Decennial History of the North Woods

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Today we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the first tournament held in North Woods. It is a day for remembering this barony's glorious past. The history of North Woods is most important for its own people, both those of us who were there at the beginning who labored to establish the barony, and those who later worked to build it further. Yet the story of North Woods is also of great significance for the entire Midrealm, on whose growth and culture the barony has had such a crucial influence. This fact King Albert formally recognized long ago when he gave the barony the right to bear the kingdom's arms in canton. Therefore, that the barony's past may be better known, but also in your honor, I have written this brief chronicle.

Lack of both time and space have prevented my little book from being more than a poor mirror of the past. Much has been omitted, much has been only briefly described. For this I beg pardon. If it seems that I have spoken more of the early days of the barony than of the recent past, this is because I have thought it best to record fully what I myself knew best, the origins of the North Woods. Perhaps another, more qualified than I, will someday do justice to the tale of the events of latter days.

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